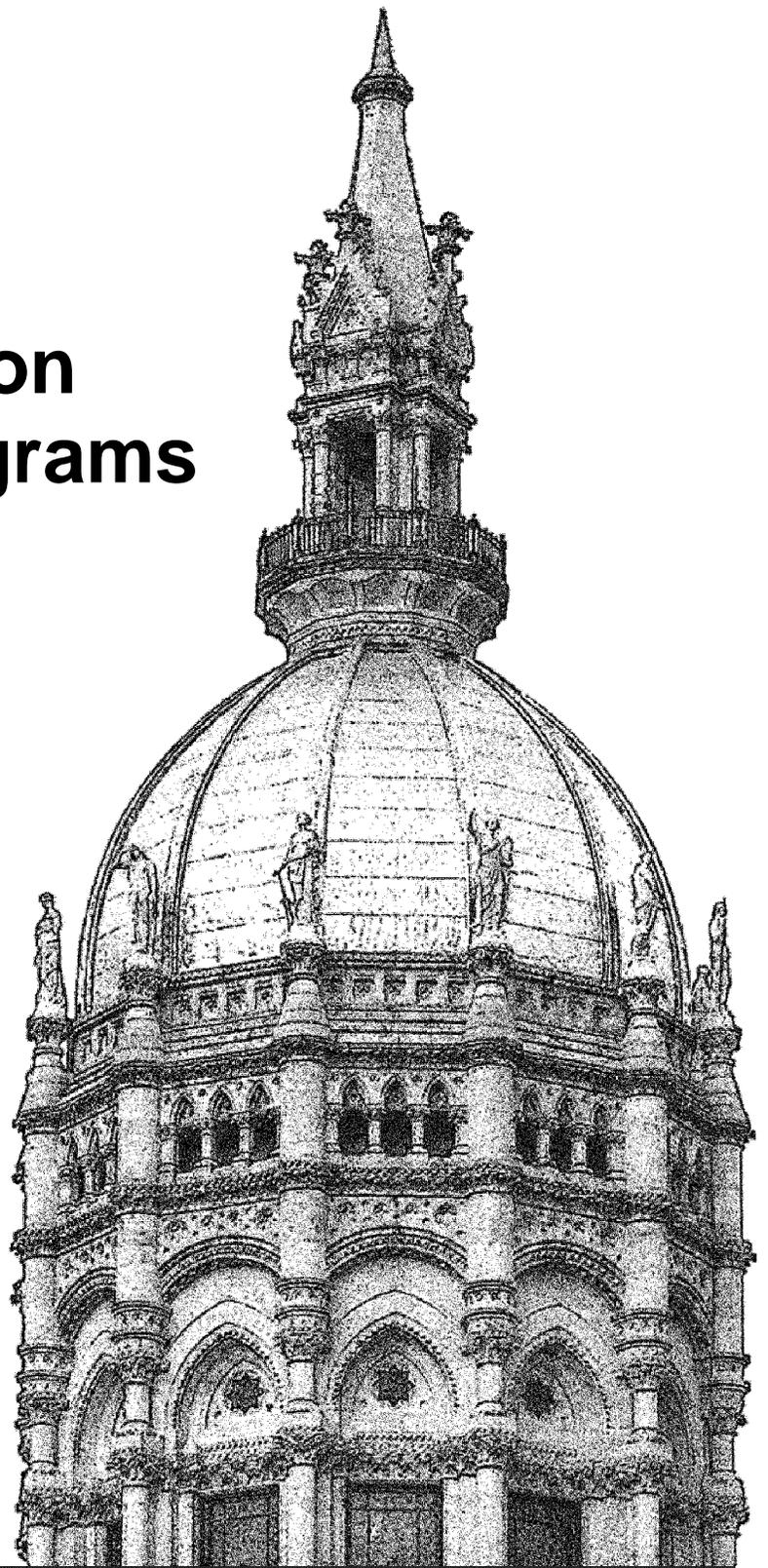


# Higher Education Certificate Programs

December 2014



**PRI**

**Legislative Program Review and  
Investigations Committee**

Connecticut General Assembly

**CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE**

The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee is a bipartisan statutory committee of the Connecticut General Assembly. It was established in 1972 to evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness, and statutory compliance of selected state agencies and programs, recommending remedies where needed. In 1975, the General Assembly expanded the committee's function to include investigations, and in 1985, gave the committee authority to raise and report bills. In 1977, the committee also acquired responsibility for "sunset" (automatic program termination) performance reviews. The state's sunset law, however, was amended in 2012; PRI is still involved, but the legislature's subject matter committees have roles as well.

The program review committee is composed of 12 members. The president pro tempore of the Senate, the Senate minority leader, the speaker of the house, and the House minority leader each appoint three members.

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LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW  
& INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE

Higher Education Certificate Programs

DECEMBER 2014

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## Higher Education Certificate Programs

### Background

In May 2014, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee (PRI) voted to examine the effectiveness of workforce development sub-baccalaureate certificate programs to determine if the type of certificate holders Connecticut is producing is aligned with employer demand. The study developed a detailed description of certificates awarded by the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR), (which for this project is effectively the 12 public community colleges and Charter Oak State College), and 57 private occupational schools, which tend to be for-profit.

A prominent workforce study has indicated that in Connecticut 65 percent of all jobs will require some type of postsecondary education beyond high school by 2018. The most recent figures indicate that Connecticut's postsecondary education attainment level is about 56 percent. This suggests a fairly significant gap.

The data in this report show that private occupational schools offered 308 certificate programs and accounted for about three-quarters (18,668) of the approximately 25,000 certificate program enrollments and 19,000 (13,651) awards in academic year 2013. (The actual totals would be higher because 20 percent of private occupational schools did not report complete data).

Over the same time period, community college *noncredit programs* enrolled 4,240 students (16 percent) and awarded 3,208 certificates (17 percent) from 141 programs, while community college *for-credit programs* had 1,819 enrollments (7 percent) and 2,035 awards (11 percent) granted in 101 programs.

This report contains committee findings and 11 recommendations.

### Main Findings

**Transparency and accountability needs to be improved for all certificate programs.** Potential and current students cannot easily compare certificate program costs and outcomes across schools and colleges.

**BOR needs to correct fundamental problems in managing certificate programs.** BOR's process for collecting and reporting certain data about for-credit and noncredit certificates is unreliable and not comprehensive. BOR does not have a definition of certificates or a comprehensive, coordinated marketing plan for certificate programs

**Similarly named noncredit certificate programs as well as the noncredit program approval processes vary considerably by community college.** Differences among similar programs included course hours, tuition costs, and the type of qualifications earned. Not all community colleges use the same criteria for approving new certificates.

**OHE needs to improve oversight practices and capabilities.** OHE does not audit certain private occupational school student data and relies on unpaid evaluators to review occupational school certificate curriculums.

### PRI Recommendations

**OHE shall maintain a website that provides for comparative information among certificate programs. Certain certificate program information shall also be available on each school's website.** The goal of this recommendation is to allow potential and current students to be able to compare and select the certificate program that best meets their needs

**BOR's management processes should be improved.** BOR should: improve its tracking of student information; develop a written definition of educational certificates; and create a system-wide marketing plan.

**BOR should adopt a uniform naming convention for noncredit programs offered by the community colleges.** The community colleges need to reduce the confusion that can ensue because certificates with the same name differ in many aspects.

**Certain BOR practices should be standardized.** The approval process for new noncredit programs should be consistent but maintain approval at each community college level. All 12 community colleges should consider incorporating the cost of taking a national certification exam into the cost of tuition and fees as some do now.

**OHE should audit data submitted by independent colleges and universities, and develop a cost estimate to fund curriculum evaluators.** Ensuring the accuracy of data and appropriate curriculums are important oversight functions.

# Acronyms

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<b>BOR</b>	Connecticut State Colleges and Universities - Board of Regents for Higher Education
<b>CETC</b>	Connecticut Employment and Training Commission
<b>CIP</b>	Classification of Instructional Programs
<b>DOL</b>	Connecticut Department of Labor
<b>ED</b>	United States Department of Education
<b>FSA</b>	Federal Student Aid Program
<b>HEA</b>	Higher Education Act
<b>IPEDS</b>	Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
<b>NCES</b>	National Center for Education Statistics
<b>NCHEMS</b>	National Center for Higher Education Management Systems
<b>OHE</b>	Office of Higher Education
<b>O*NET</b>	Occupational Information Network
<b>OWC</b>	Office of Workforce Competitiveness
<b>P20 WIN</b>	Preschool through 20 and Workforce Information Network
<b>PPA</b>	Program Participation Agreement
<b>SOC</b>	Standard Occupational Classification

# Executive Summary

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## Higher Education Certificate Programs

In May 2014, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations (PRI) Committee approved a study to examine the effectiveness of certain sub-baccalaureate certificates in meeting Connecticut's workforce demand. Specifically, the study scope required a detailed profile of sub-baccalaureate certificate programs offered by the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR), (which for this study, concerns only the state's 12 community colleges and Charter Oak State College),<sup>1</sup> and private occupational schools, which tend to be for-profit institutions. In addition, the study compared Connecticut's certificate completion rate to that of other states.

The study also examined, on a limited basis, whether the supply of certificate holders is aligned with job demand. Although PRI staff began working with staff from the Department of Labor (DOL) and BOR in early August in order to fulfill the committee's charge to examine the alignment between certificate graduates and employment following graduation, DOL was unable to provide the data until December 2014, thus only limited analysis could be performed by staff.

### How Are Certificate Programs Defined?

There are various definitions of what constitutes a postsecondary sub-baccalaureate educational certificate. Broadly speaking, a sub-baccalaureate certificate could be defined as any award below the bachelor's degree level that was granted based on a formal program of study. Program review staff consulted academic and government literature and conducted interviews with national experts, BOR staff, and staff at certain private occupational schools to determine how certificates are defined, developed, and marketed. Certificate program definitions, types, length, and purposes are fairly diverse, though they can be distinguished from other types of credentials such as professional certifications or state licenses. In fact certificates often provide training that qualifies students to sit for professional certifications and state licenses.

### What Does the Data Show about Connecticut's Certificate Programs?

Altogether, there were 550 certificate programs offered by private occupational schools and community colleges between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2013 (AY 13). Of the total, 308 programs were offered by private occupational schools and 242 by community colleges. There were approximately 24,727 students enrolled in certificate programs during this time period, with private occupational schools accounting for nearly 75 percent of all enrollments.

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<sup>1</sup> While the scope of study includes an examination of BOR's state universities, a search of sub-baccalaureate certificates for those institutions in a U.S. Department of Education database (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) yielded no results and a search on BOR's website located only one for-credit sub-baccalaureate program (in American Studies at Central Connecticut State University). That certificate is primarily for international students who come to the United States for an introductory program in American studies. Noncredit certificates offered by the state universities were excluded from the study.

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There is some overlap in broadly defined instructional areas among the community college programs and the private occupational schools, especially in the health professions. However, when the certificate programs are examined by more specific occupational areas, there was very little overlap among the largest programs.

In addition, most private occupational school programs are shorter than community college programs. Furthermore, while there are some private occupational schools programs that have a lower overall tuition compared to similar programs at community colleges, the average cost to the student per credit (or equivalent credit when converted from course hours to credits) is higher among the private occupational schools. This may not be surprising as the private occupational schools do not benefit from any state subsidy and are largely for-profit organizations. Still, examples of striking price differences between the community college and private occupational schools can be found among several common certificate programs.

PRI staff also requested data from BOR to match with DOL records to examine employment and wage outcomes of students completing for-credit certificate. Information was aggregated and compared based on employment and wage data before an individual obtained a certificate and after. (See Appendix C for the analysis). Based on the data provided for 2012 and 2013:

- *For those who were unemployed:*
  - less than one percent of completers were unemployed both before and after completing a certificate program; and
  - 7 percent of certificate completers were unemployed before enrolling in a certificate programs and found employment after later.
  
- *For certificate completers that were employed before enrolling in a certificate program:*
  - about 20 percent stayed with the same employer after completion;
  - about 30 percent changed employer but stayed in the same industry; and
  - about 25 percent changed the industry they were working in after completion; no information was available for nearly 20 percent of the certificate completers.

Wages were also examined for individuals prior to obtaining a certificate and six months and one year after earning a certificate – in nearly all cases average wages increased.

### **Can a Student Receive College Credit While Earning a Certificate?**

Certificate programs' courses can be offered for credit or noncredit, depending on the institution. Postsecondary occupational schools offer "non-collegiate credit programs" that are not typically recognized by degree granting institutions. Various reasons have been offered as to why a college or university might offer a certificate program for credit or not. Advantages of

for-credit programs include the ability of the student to obtain federal financial aid, have a pathway to an associate's or bachelor's degree, and potentially transfer course credits to other institutions. Disadvantages of for-credit programs are that they can take more time to develop than noncredit programs, must meet certain accreditation requirements, and often require the student to take general education courses that may not be directly related to the occupation of interest.

A certificate program may be set up as noncredit because there is not a perceived necessity for a degree pathway connection, transferability, or accreditation status. They are typically classified for workforce or personal development. Noncredit programs may also be viewed as the appropriate type for programs designed with specific businesses in mind.

### **What are the Benefits of Postsecondary Sub-Baccalaureate Certificates?**

Educational certificates can be very beneficial to both students and employers. For employers, certificates are often viewed as a recognized credential, and for students, the benefits are a savings in time and money, increased earnings potential, and job stability. Individual outcomes, of course, can vary considerably.

Less time and fewer course requirements usually means lower costs to the student, compared to obtaining a college degree. Prices, though, can vary substantially depending on the institution that offers the certificate program, the type of certificate being sought, and its credit status. Private for-profit schools and nonprofit colleges tend to charge more than public community colleges, and even on the public side, for-credit programs are often more costly than noncredit programs.

### **Does Any Information Have to Be Reported On Student Enrollment and Completion?**

The best source of data to begin to understand the number of certificate completions (also known as awards) is maintained by the federal National Center for Education Statistic's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The completion of all IPEDS survey information however, is only mandatory for institutions that participate in any federal student financial aid program authorized by Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (such as Pell grants and federal student loans). Thus, IPEDS data are limited because a significant number of certificate programs do not report data because they do not receive federal student aid funding and for Connecticut, may be regarded as a minimum number of sub-baccalaureate certificates that have been awarded. PRI staff estimated that about 52 percent of total certificates awarded in Connecticut are not reported to IPEDS, because those programs do not qualify to participate in the federal financial aid program.

### **Has the Federal Government Taken Any Other Measures to Hold Schools and Colleges Accountable?**

Growing concerns led the U.S. Department of Education to begin to develop regulations beginning in 2009 to better measure the value of certificates earned by students who had received federal financial aid because they were enrolled in a program that led to "gainful employment in a recognized occupation" (a term used in the original Higher Education Act of

1965, but never defined). The need for regulations was prompted by a belief that a number of students were receiving financial aid for gainful employment programs that:

- were not training students in the skills they need to obtain and maintain jobs in the occupation for which the program purports to provide training;
- were providing training for an occupation for which low wages do not justify program costs;
- had a high student withdraw rate because relatively large numbers of students enroll but few complete the program, which often leads to students defaulting on their loans; and
- leave students with high levels of loan debt in relation to their earnings.

The federal government first adopted regulations in October 2010 (effective July 1, 2011), which imposed penalties on schools and colleges that failed to meet certain financial performance measures related to student debt and loan default rates, and required information be disclosed to students beyond the Student Right to Know Act of 1990.

After a court challenge, in which the financial measures were struck down, the U.S. Department of Education adopted new regulations in October 2014. The regulations require graduates of gainful employment programs meet minimum standards for student debt to earnings ratios. Failure to meet the ratios puts a school or college at risk of losing its Title IV eligible (the rule only applies to schools and colleges eligible to receive these funds.) It also requires public disclosures regarding performance and outcomes of their gainful employment programs including information on program costs and employment outcomes. No disclosures are required however, for the non-credit certificate programs at community colleges and private occupational schools that do not receive Title IV funds.

A lawsuit seeking repeal of the regulations was filed in federal district court on November 6, 2014.<sup>2</sup> To date, no ruling has been issued by the court.

### **PRI Committee Findings and Recommendations**

The committee made 11 recommendations. The recommendations aim to help potential and current students of Connecticut certificate programs be equipped with better information to select the program that best serves their needs. Currently, there is no single source of information students can access that allows them to compare certificate program costs, hours for program completion, and graduation and placement rates among similar programs.

This report contains the PRI committee's findings and 11 recommendations. The intent of the committee's recommendations is to increase the amount of information available about certificate programs to potential and current students. By improving transparency, students will be able to easily compare certificate programs among the various schools and colleges to identify the program that best meets their needs. The committee believes that all schools and colleges

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<sup>2</sup> The lawsuit (Association of Private Sector Colleges and Universities v. U.S. Department of Education, and United States of America), filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, alleges the regulations exceed the U.S. Department of Education's statutory authority and are unconstitutional.

should be held accountable by publishing tuition costs, completion rates, and placement rates, which will aid students in their program and school choices. Currently, there is no single source of information students can access that allows them to compare certificate program costs, hours for program completion, and graduation and placement rates among similar programs.

- 1. The Office of Higher Education shall develop and maintain a cost and outcome reporting system to provide information about all certificates awarded by public, private, and nonprofit institutions. Each entity shall provide the required data annually, to the office in a uniform format developed by the office. The office shall publish the data provided on its website that allows for basic comparisons to be made among similar types of certificate programs, as well as more detailed program information in a format determined by the office. The detailed profile shall include the following:**
  - a. tuition and fees for a student completing within the normal amount of time based on program length and full- or part-time attendance;**
  - b. typical costs for books and supplies (unless a part of tuition and fees) and the cost of room and board, if applicable;**
  - c. median loan debt incurred by students who completed a for-credit certificate program (separately by Title IV loans and other education debt, including private and institutional loans) and for students completing a noncredit program, if available;**
  - d. enrollments and awards by year;**
  - e. basic demographic information (gender, age, and race/ethnicity);**
  - f. graduation rates for student cohorts completing the program;**
  - g. average time to complete program;**
  - h. job placement rates for students completing the program;**
  - i. entry level starting salary, based on Connecticut DOL statistics;**
  - j. average salary, based on Connecticut DOL statistics;**
  - k. annual/cohort national certification pass rate, (if applicable); and**
  - l. state licensure pass rate, (if applicable).**

**Each college or private occupational school that offers a certificate program shall publish this information on its website as prominently as the certificate program description.**

2. Each college or private occupational school shall develop a one-page fact sheet for each certificate program offered that provides basic information to the potential applicant. At a minimum, the fact sheet should include tuition, fees, books and supplies, as well as graduation and placement rates, and average student debt.
3. The board of regents should modify its current administrative systems and practices to permit an accurate accounting, tracking, and reporting of:
  - a. the number of students enrolled and awarded certificates on a for-credit and noncredit basis, as well as completion rates by certificate program on a cohort basis;
  - b. the amount of financial aid received by students in certificate programs;
  - c. an indication of the number of students accumulating excess credits in pursuit of a certificate;
  - d. the length of time to completion for all students awarded certificates;
  - e. the number of students who took certification and state licensing examinations, and the pass rates; and
  - f. placement rates of certificate awardees to the extent possible through using the state's longitudinal student tracking system (P20 WIN).
4. The Board of Regents for Higher Education shall appoint a workgroup composed of continuing education deans from the community colleges to undertake a review of all community college noncredit certificate programs. The workgroup's goal should be to design a uniform naming convention to easily distinguish between noncredit certificate programs with similar and different requirements within the same field of study. Programs that vary should be distinguished using a Level I, Level II (or similar) approach so that enhanced certificate program requirements and qualifications earned are recognized and naming of programs is uniform.

In addition, tuition of similarly named certificate programs leading to the same qualifications should be periodically reviewed to determine if the cost variations are reasonable.

5. The board of regents should ensure the 12 community college websites' easily identify noncredit certificate program costs.
6. Community colleges should consider including the cost of sitting for a national certification, if applicable, as part of the noncredit tuition and fees for the certificate program.
7. The Dean of Continuing Education of each of the community colleges, or his or her designee, should establish a workgroup to design a standard form that can

be used, internally, by each of the community colleges in reviewing new noncredit programs to determine if the certificate should be approved. The review form should include, but not be limited to the following:

- number of courses needed for completion;
  - course tuition and fees;
  - minimum/maximum number of students to make course economically viable;
  - labor market information that confirms demand, including supporting Connecticut Department of Labor data on employment demand;
  - community college advisory board recommendations;
  - names of local employers contacted and responses, with a requirement to contact at least three employers;
  - availability of similar programs, including location, tuition, and enrollment numbers;
  - how the program will be marketed to students;
  - source of curriculum and how the department will ensure it is up-to-date and relevant to the certificate program;
  - the proposed credentials of potential instructors and how recruitment will be handled; and
  - any other considerations.
8. The board of regents should develop a written definition and defined purpose of for-credit and noncredit educational certificates.
  9. The board of regents should consider developing a more comprehensive approach to make potential students aware of certificate offerings by developing a marketing plan for certificate programs for the 12 community college system. The plan should provide enough direction to ensure alignment with the board's strategic goals for the system as a whole but flexible enough to recognize the unique market segments which each colleges serves.
  10. The Office of Higher Education shall develop a program to audit at least a sample of student data from sub-baccalaureate certificate programs of private occupational schools, schools of hairdressing, hospitals-based schools, and the independent colleges and universities on an annual basis.
  11. The Office of Higher Education should develop a cost estimate to fund curriculum evaluators, where needed, and submit such an estimate to the committees of the General Assembly that have cognizance over postsecondary education and appropriations. The office should explore the possibility of using of the private occupational school student protection account to fund this request.



## Higher Education Certificate Programs

A prominent workforce study has reported that 65 percent of all jobs in Connecticut will require some type of postsecondary education beyond high school by 2018.<sup>1</sup> The most recent figures indicate Connecticut's postsecondary education attainment level is about 56 percent.<sup>2</sup> This suggests a fairly significant gap.

Postsecondary education does not necessarily mean going to a four-year institution to obtain a bachelor's degree. Nationally, most undergraduates do not earn a bachelor's degree. There were more sub-baccalaureate educational certificates (1.03 million)<sup>3</sup> and associate degrees (940,000) awarded combined (1.97 million) than bachelor's degrees (1.7 million) in 2010-11.<sup>4</sup> Educational certificates were the second most frequently awarded postsecondary credential. Their growth has significantly outpaced that of bachelor's degrees.<sup>5</sup>

In May 2014, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations (PRI) Committee formally approved a study to examine the effectiveness of certain sub-baccalaureate certificates in meeting employer demand. Specifically, the study was to include a detailed description of certificate programs awarded by the Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR), (which for this study, concerns only the state's 12 community colleges and Charter Oak State College),<sup>6</sup> private nonprofit colleges and universities, and private occupational schools, which tend to be for-profit institutions. (A list of the institutions included in this study can be found in Appendix A.). The study was to also analyze whether the supply of certificate holders is aligned with job demand. Finally, the study would compare Connecticut's certificate completion rate to that of other states.

## Study Findings

This report contains PRI committee findings and 11 recommendations. Overall, the committee found a lack of certificate program information for potential and current students that would allow for valid comparisons among schools and colleges. There was considerable

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Carnevale, Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl. 2010. *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> This study focus is on postsecondary sub-baccalaureate educational certificates. For brevity's sake, they may be referred to as just "certificates" throughout the document.

<sup>4</sup> National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) 2012. *Digest of Education Statistics*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Tables 310 and 311. Note this does not include the certificates awarded at schools that do not participate in federal aid programs ("Title IV").

<sup>5</sup> NCES, 2010, Table 292 and NCES 2012 Table 310.

<sup>6</sup> While the scope of study includes an examination of BOR's state universities, a search of sub-baccalaureate certificates for those institutions in a U.S. Department of Education database (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System) yielded no results and a search on BOR's website located only one sub-baccalaureate program (in American Studies at Central Connecticut State University). That certificate is primarily for international students who come to the United States for an introductory program in American studies and was not included in this study. The state universities do offer a few noncredit certificates but those were also excluded from this study.

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variation both across and within for-credit and noncredit community certificate programs – even with programs that had the identical name. In addition, the committee found the cost of tuition varied considerable among similarly named certificate programs both within the community college system and when compared to programs offered by private occupational schools.

The intent of the committee’s recommendations is to increase the amount of information available about certificate programs to potential and current students. By improving transparency, students will be able to easily compare certificate programs among the various schools and colleges to identify the program that best meets their needs. The committee believes that all schools and colleges should be held accountable by publishing tuition costs, completion rates, and placement rates, which will aid students in their program and school choices.

The federal government recently adopted regulations that will penalize colleges and schools that receive federal Title IV funding under the Federal Student Aid program and whose programs are supposed to lead to “gainful employment in a recognized occupation.” Graduates of these programs must meet certain student debt to earnings ratio or else a school may lose eligibility to receive Title IV funds. In addition, the regulations require schools and colleges to provide more information to students about schools offering certificate programs. A lawsuit however, has been filed in federal court seeking repeal of the regulations and at the time of publication of this report, the court has not issued a ruling.

Much of the information recommended by the committee to be published is already required for schools and colleges that are eligible to receive federal financial aid. However, as noted by staff in the October update, most private occupational schools, as well as non-credit programs offered by the community colleges, do not fall under these federal requirements because federal financial aid is not available to students. The committee believes that students enrolling in certificate programs will benefit from similar information being provided for both Title IV and non-Title IV schools and programs.

## **Study Methodology and Sources**

A variety of sources and methods were used to conduct research for this study. This included:

- interviews with higher education researchers and policy analysts;
- a review of available and relevant literature on the topic;
- additional interviews with personnel representing the larger private occupational schools in Connecticut and with the administrative staff of BOR, the state Office of Higher Education (OHE), and DOL; and
- analysis of:
  - longitudinal student data (Preschool through 20 Workforce Information Network, known as P20 WIN) by examining a cohort of community college for-credit certificate graduates to determine the impact the certificate made on careers and wages;

- demographic data provided by BOR on community college and Charter Oak students enrolled in and awarded certificates, and the types of certificates received by them;
- data provided by OHE on the types of certificate programs offered, and graduation and placement rates for private occupational school programs; and
- limited data set provided by Goodwin College.

A full description of the data sets analyzed by PRI staff is provided in Appendix B. As noted in the appendix, a number of data problems prevented staff from providing a complete analysis as anticipated in the scope of study. One of the more prominent roadblocks was DOL's difficulty in providing the data necessary to examine supply and demand trends for certificate programs.

PRI staff also requested data from BOR to match with DOL records to examine employment and wage outcomes of students completing for-credit certificate. Information was aggregated and compared based on employment and wage data before an individual obtained a certificate and after. Appendix C contains this analysis.

## **Report Organization**

This report has four chapters and five appendices. Chapter I provides a definition of certificates, describes the benefits of obtaining a certificate, and compares certificate attainment rates among the states. Chapter II describes the role of the federal government in overseeing and regulating certificate providers as well as the state agencies that have a role in certificate production, oversight, and workforce demand assessment. Chapter III provides a comparison of the certificate programs offered by the board of regents through its community colleges to the private occupational schools. This chapter also contains a detailed profile of community colleges and postsecondary occupational schools that offer certificate programs. Finally, Chapter IV contains the committee's findings and recommendations.

## **Agency Response**

It is the policy of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee to provide agencies subject to a study with the opportunity to review and comment on the committee findings and recommendations prior to publication of the final report. The Board of Regents for Higher Education declined to provide a response. Appendix E contains the written response from the Office of Higher Education.



## Educational Certificates: Definition, Benefits, and Prevalence

This chapter provides an overview of how educational certificates are defined, describes the benefits of obtaining a certificate, and examines how Connecticut compares to other states in terms of certificate attainment. The key points include:

- definitions of sub-baccalaureate educational certificates vary but the certificates are typically described as shorter-term postsecondary credentials that focus on job-specific skills or knowledge;
- both certificate holders and their employers benefit from educational certificates; and
- although Connecticut appears to rank low among the states (11<sup>th</sup> lowest) when comparing the percentage of the population that hold certificates as the highest level of educational attainment, the state has a high degree of overall postsecondary educational attainment (7<sup>th</sup> highest), however definitive conclusions about Connecticut's position cannot be made because data are lacking in key areas.

### What are Postsecondary Sub-baccalaureate Educational Certificates?

There are various definitions of what constitutes a postsecondary sub-baccalaureate educational certificate. Broadly speaking, a sub-baccalaureate certificate could be defined as any award below the bachelor's degree level that was granted based on a formal program of study. Program review staff consulted academic and government literature and conducted interviews with national experts, BOR staff, and staff at certain private occupational schools to determine how certificates are defined, developed, and marketed. Certificate program definitions, types, length, and purposes are fairly diverse, though they can be distinguished from other types of credentials.

**Different definitions.** One comprehensive study defines a certificate as “recognition of a course of study based on a specific field, usually associated with a limited set of occupations.”<sup>7</sup> However, the federal Department of Education, which tracks the awarding of educational certificates, defines them as “formal awards conferred by the institution as the result of completion of an academic or occupational program of study.” The agency is working to refine its definition and data collection practices because of inconsistencies in how data are reported across postsecondary institutions.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Carnevale, A. P., Rose, S. J., & Hanson, A. R. 2012. *Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

<sup>8</sup> Sykes, A. 2012. *Defining and Reporting Sub-baccalaureate Certificates in IPEDS* (NPEC 2012-835). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Postsecondary Education Cooperative.

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Neither the board of regents nor the private occupational schools staff interviewed by PRI staff had an official written definition or defined purpose of educational certificates.<sup>9</sup> (The board of regents has written procedures that guide the certificate approval process but do not actually define a certificate or its purpose). Generally, in interviews with staff at those institutions, certificate programs were described as having a defined group or sequence of courses that focus on an area of specialized knowledge and have a career or occupational focus. With certificates, there is commonly an emphasis on gaining specific skills and knowledge that can be readily transferred to the workforce.

*U.S. Census Bureau definition.* The U.S. Census Bureau has been part of a federal interagency work group that recently developed a “working definition” of educational certificates. The definition is used by the bureau to guide its research about the prevalence of certificate holders throughout the country. Until recently, there has not been much federal interest in collecting specific data on this type of educational award. However, there is an increasing recognition that certificates play an important role assisting job seekers in obtaining employment and in helping other individuals advance in their careers.

Unlike well-recognized traditional academic degrees, such as associate’s, bachelor’s, and advanced degrees, certificates fall into the category of “alternative educational credentials,” along with *professional certifications* and *licenses*. Although there is some variation and often confusion over definitions, there are acknowledged differences between these three credentials. The U.S. Census Bureau uses the following three definitions of alternative educational credentials:

1. ***Educational certificate:*** A credential awarded by a training provider or educational institution based on completion of all requirements for a program of study, including coursework and test or other performance evaluations. Certificates are typically awarded for life (like a degree). Certificates of attendance or participation in a short-term training (e.g., one day) are not in the definitional scope for educational certificates;
2. ***Professional certification:*** A credential awarded by a certification body based on an individual demonstrating through an examination process that he or she has acquired the designated knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform a specific job. The examination can be written, oral, or performance-based. Certification is a time-limited credential that is renewed through a recertification process; and
3. ***License:*** A credential awarded by a licensing agency (typically state government) based on pre-determined criteria. The criteria may include some combination of degree attainment, certifications, certificates, assessment, apprenticeship programs, or work experience. Licenses are time-limited and must be renewed periodically.

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<sup>9</sup> Charter Oak State College does provides a description in its course catalogue of certificates programs as “both credit and non-credit, (these programs) are designed for adults who are interested in learning a specific set of skills and gaining knowledge in a certain area, but who may not want to earn, or have already earned, a degree.”

**Credit status.** Certificate programs' courses can be offered for credit or noncredit, depending on the institution. Postsecondary occupational schools offer "non-collegiate credit programs" that are not typically recognized by degree granting institutions. However, one for-profit school told PRI staff that in the case of student transfers, the receiving schools determine if the courses are credit worthy.

Various reasons have been offered as to why a college or university might offer a certificate program for credit or not. Advantages of for-credit programs include the ability of the student to obtain federal financial aid, have a pathway to an associate's or bachelor's degree, and potentially transfer course credits to other institutions. Disadvantages of for-credit programs are that they can take more time to develop than noncredit programs, must meet certain accreditation requirements, and often require the student to take general education courses that may not be directly related to the occupation of interest.

A certificate program may be set up as noncredit because there is not a perceived necessity for the pathways connection, transferability, or accreditation status, when weighted against the preliminary effort and monitoring involved. They are typically classified for workforce or personal development. Noncredit programs may also be viewed as the appropriate type for programs designed with specific businesses in mind. Finally, the reason may be tradition.

**Length.** Certificate programs' length differs. A student enrolled in a full-time certificate program can take a few months to complete the program or four years depending on the certificate. The majority of certificate programs offered in Connecticut take two years or less to complete for students enrolled full-time.

**Purposes.** Knowing the reason why a prospective student would enroll in a certificate program, can help to inform the definition and purpose of the program. Studies of certificate programs and staff interviews with those in the postsecondary education field suggest that the reasons individuals enroll in certificate programs can vary tremendously. The programs can serve as occupational training for high school graduates trying to enter a particular field or industry, or for a worker looking to change fields. In addition, certificates can be used to prepare for an industry certification, state licensure, or as a way to begin a path to a college degree. Further, experienced workers with college degrees may also use certificate programs to learn a new skill.<sup>10</sup>

**Postsecondary institutions included in this study.** Educational certificates are offered by many types of organizations, including community colleges, technical and business schools, trade unions, businesses, professional organizations, and government agencies. The focus of this study is on for-credit and noncredit, sub-baccalaureate certificate programs offered by the Board of Regents for Higher Education and private occupational schools (also referred to as "career" or

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<sup>10</sup> Carnevale, A. P., Rose, S. J., & Hanson, A. R. 2012.

“technical” colleges).<sup>11</sup> Combined, these institutions account for most of the certificates awarded in Connecticut based on the best available information.

### **What are the Benefits of Postsecondary Sub-Baccalaureate Certificates?**

Educational certificates can be very beneficial to both students and employers. For employers, certificates are often viewed as a recognized credential, and for students, the benefits are a savings in time and money, increased earnings potential, and job stability. Individual outcomes, of course, can vary considerably.

**Recognizable credential.** For employers, educational certificate programs typically signify that a student has reached a certain standard of knowledge about a given vocational or professional subject. It can be viewed as a recognized credential that can indicate to employers a job applicant’s type of training and competency. In most circumstances, having an educational certificate gives job seekers an advantage over only having a high school diploma when starting an occupation. In addition, certain educational certificates qualify graduates to sit for industry certifications, which further strengthen the recognition and portability of the credential. Finally, educational certificate programs, especially noncredit ones, can be designed and implemented in a short period of time, which may make them more responsive to employers’ shifting workplace training demands and changing technology compared to traditional credentials.

**Less time, more flexible, reduced requirements.** An advantage for students seeking a certificate is that it can typically be obtained more quickly than certain other educational credentials like an associate’s degree. Certificate programs are usually designed to take under two years to complete. For example, an associate’s degree at a Connecticut community college requires a student to earn 60 credits (usually 20 courses) over two years as a full-time student. Most community college for-credit certificates, on the other hand, require less than 59 credits and can be completed on a full-time basis in less than 24 months; many within 12 months.

Certificate programs, especially noncredit offerings, are often viewed as being more flexible. They can be offered at different times of the year as the programs do not have to adhere to the typical academic calendar year. Further, noncredit programs and most of the certificate programs in private occupational schools do not have any general education requirements, such as college-level math and English courses. These requirements can be an entry barrier to many students.

**Less costly.** Less time and fewer course requirements usually means lower costs to the student, compared to obtaining a college degree. Prices, though, can vary substantially depending on the institution that offers the certificate program, the type of certificate being sought, and its credit status. Private for-profit schools and nonprofit colleges tend to charge more than public community colleges, and even on the public side, for-credit programs are often more costly than noncredit programs.

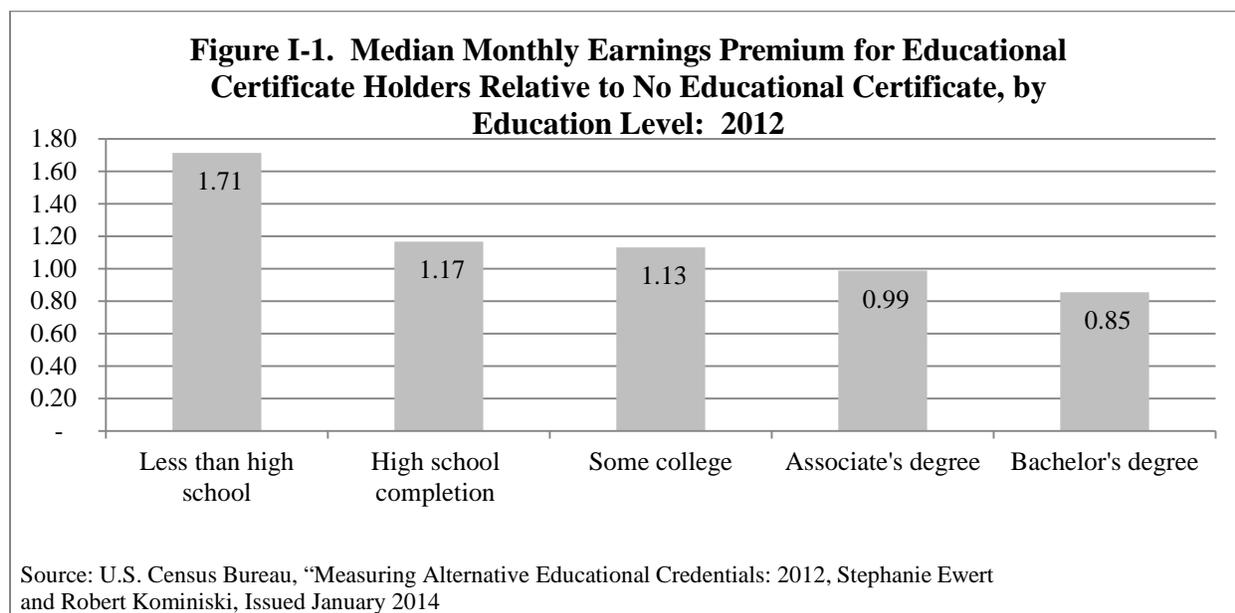
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<sup>11</sup> Due to concerns with data quality and time constraints, other certificate awarding institutions such as hospital-based schools, schools of hairdressing/cosmetology, for-profit higher education institutions, certain religious-based institutions, and technical high schools have been excluded from the study.

Some questions arise as to why potential students would select high cost certificate programs over relatively lower cost community college programs. It has been suggested to program review staff (and supported in the literature) that, in some cases, for-profits can be more agile in responding to market needs, may provide better student support and retention systems, and can be more flexible in scheduling classes at times that meet students' needs. In addition, for-profit institutions tend to rely more heavily on advertising and are adept at arranging federal and private loans for their students.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, these institutions' offerings may be more familiar to potential students and appear more accommodating in helping students arrange financing.

Concerns about some certificate programs leaving many students with high student debt levels have prompted the federal government to develop "Gainful Employment" requirements. These mandate that certain schools report program completion rates as well as wage and employment outcomes. However, there have been two attempts to implement such regulations but were challenged in court.

**Greater earnings potential.** Educational certificates can provide a path to greater earnings, especially for those with limited educational attainment. Figure I-1 shows the ratio of earnings of those with an educational certificate compared to earnings of those without an educational certificate.



The earnings of those with an educational certificate were significantly higher compared to those at the same educational level below an associate's degree. For example, individuals who had less than a high school degree earned 71 percent more with an educational certificate compared to other individuals with less than high school education and no certificate.

People who completed high school experienced a 17 percent earnings premium with a certificate compared to those individuals with only a high school degree. On the other end of the

<sup>12</sup> See for example, Carnevale, A. P., Rose, S. J., & Hanson, A. R., 2012.

spectrum, those with a bachelor’s degree and an educational certificate earned less (85 cents for every dollar) than those with just a bachelor’s degree. One possible explanation for this decline in wages could be that these workers may be in the process of changing occupations.

As a consequence of this earnings premium for those with limited educational attainment, there is a societal benefit as well. Those with an educational certificate tend to pay about 17 percent more, on average, in federal, state, and local taxes than those with a high school degree.<sup>13</sup>

Similar to other educational credentials, not all certificates have the same financial return. Different certificates have different salary expectations. Table I-1 shows the average salary of jobs available for the selected certificate areas. Technology and some health-related certificates tend to be associated with better paying occupations.

<i>Certificate Area</i>	<i>Average Salary (2013)</i>
Computer Technology A+ certification	\$73,885
AutoCAD	\$57,324
Medical Coding and Billing	\$50,475
Massage Therapy	\$45,726
Machinist/Precision Machining	\$44,430
Dental Assistant	\$41,172
Patient Care Technician	\$35,000
Home Health Aide	\$24,606
Institutional Food Worker	\$24,472
Source: BOR, DOL	

**Employment stability.** Greater educational attainment is linked to employment stability. As shown in Table I-2, individuals with some college but no degree (a category that includes certificate holders) are less likely to be unemployed than those with only a high school diploma or less.

<i>Education Attained</i>	<i>Unemployment Rate (Percent)</i>
Doctoral degree	2.2
Professional degree	2.3
Master's degree	3.4
Bachelor's degree	4.0
Associate's degree	5.4
<i>Some college, no degree</i>	7.0
High school diploma	7.5
Less than a high school diploma	11.0
Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers. Source: Current Population Survey, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics	

<sup>13</sup> Baum, Sandy, Jennifer Ma, and Kathleen Payea. 2013. *Education Pays 2013: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society. Trends in Higher Education*. New York, NY: College Board.

**Other potential benefits unknown.** Several studies have shown that higher education accrues various other benefits to the individual and society as a whole. Bachelor degree graduates, for example, are less likely to need social services, experience greater job satisfaction, and tend to have healthier lifestyles compared to those with a high school education or less. Although some of these benefits may also attach to certificate awardees, it is unknown whether and to what extent these benefits vary with other levels of higher education.

### **What are the Limitations to Obtaining Information about Certificate Awards?**

All postsecondary educational institutions authorized to operate in Connecticut have the potential to award certificates. The best source of data to begin to understand the number of certificate completions (also known as awards) is maintained by the federal National Center for Education Statistic's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The completion of all IPEDS survey information is mandatory for institutions that participate in any federal student financial aid program authorized by Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (such as Pell grants and federal student loans). (See Chapter II for further explanation of federal financial aid programs.) However, IPEDS data are limited because a significant number of certificate programs do not report data as they do not receive federal student aid funding. As described below, the most significant omissions from the data set are noncredit certificates offered by community colleges and the certificates awarded by the majority of private occupational schools.

**Missing schools.** Table I-3 compares the number of schools, colleges, and universities that are authorized to operate in Connecticut to the number that report to IPEDS and to the number that are examined in this study. Some data reporting deficiencies can be noted.

For example, in Connecticut only 25 of the 80 (31 percent) private occupational schools (including branch locations) report their certificate completion data to IPEDS because they participate in federal student aid programs.<sup>14</sup> Private occupational schools award most of the certificates (as noted below) in Connecticut.

Similarly, 34 nonprofit colleges and universities are authorized to operate in Connecticut. Twenty-three are domiciled in the state, of which one is included in this study.<sup>15</sup> Eleven out-of-state nonprofit colleges and universities are licensed to operate in the state and report data to IPEDS but do not track degree or certificate completions that they award by state. It should be noted that these out-of-state institutions may not necessarily (and most likely do not) offer any certificate programs.

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<sup>14</sup> Twenty-two private occupational schools are the actual number of schools that report to IPEDS but because OHE and IPEDS count the schools' branches differently the numbers do not match.

<sup>15</sup> Six of the nonprofit colleges domiciled in the state, and excluded from the study, offer religious-based instruction. One other exclusion is an institute that only offers graduate degrees. Fifteen other non-profit colleges were asked to participate but did not provide data.

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<b>Table I-3. Institutions that are Licensed in CT, in IPEDS, and in Study with Sub-baccalaureate Certificate Count</b>						
<i>School Type</i>	<i>Number of Schools Authorized</i>	<i>Number In IPEDS</i>	<i>Number in Study</i>	<i>Total Sub-Baccalaureate Certificates Awards Reported to IPEDS - 2013</i>	<i>Estimate of Total Number of Certificates Awarded (including those <u>not</u> in IPEDS)</i>	<i>Estimated % of Awarded Certificates Captured by IPEDS</i>
Community Colleges and Charter Oak	13	13	13	2,091	5,225+	< 40%
Nonprofit Colleges and Universities	34	34	1	304	304	100%
Private Occupational Schools (plus Branches) <sup>1</sup>	80	25	80	7,063	15,853 <sup>2</sup>	45%
Sub-Total	127	72	94	9,458	21,382+	< 44%
Hairdressing/Cosmetology <sup>3</sup>	96	13	0	993	993+	< 100%
Other	20	16	0	583	583+	< 100%
Total <sup>4</sup>	243	101	94	11,034	22,913+	< 48%
<p><sup>1</sup>OHE reports that there are 25 private occupational schools and branches that are Title IV eligible and, therefore, report to IPEDS. The manner in which institutions report to IPEDS (total 22) is different than how they report to OHE (total 25). One school, for example, has multiple branches that report as one school to IPEDS.</p> <p><sup>2</sup>Data for 2011-2012 used for comparative purposes.</p> <p><sup>3</sup>Excluded from study due to concerns with data collection and quality.</p> <p><sup>4</sup>Excludes technical high schools that report to IPEDS.</p> <p>+ represents that additional certificates are known to exist in this category but have not been quantified.</p> <p>Source: NCES IPEDS, OHE</p>						

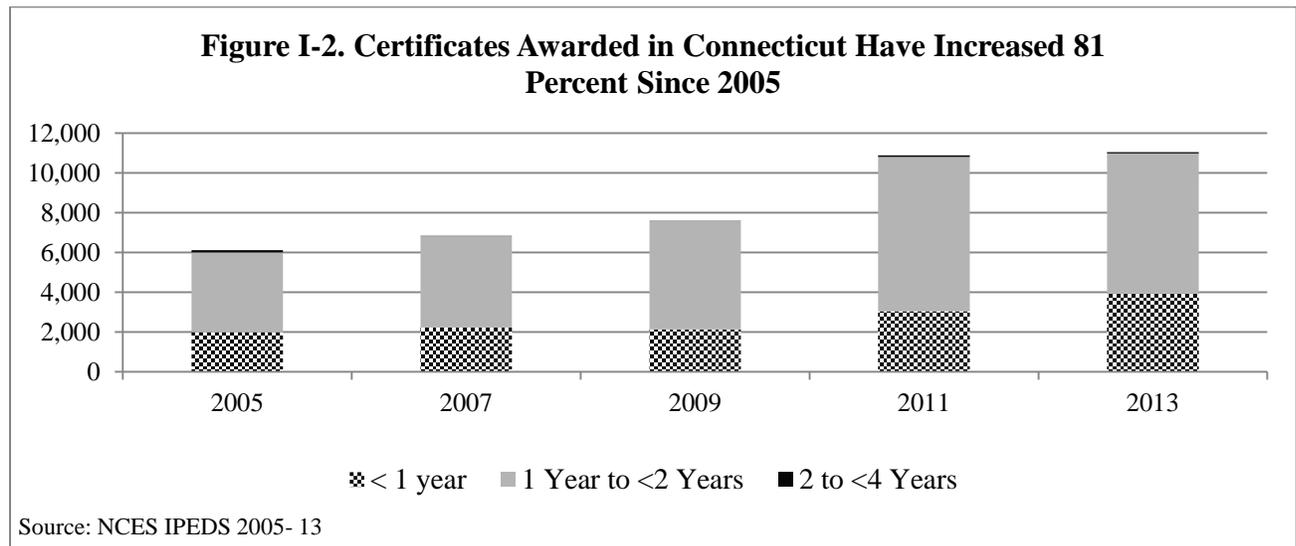
**Missing data.** The table also gives an indication of the quantity of certificate completion data that are missing from IPEDS. Program review staff analyzed information regarding certificate completions for students attending private occupational schools. IPEDS reported 7,063 completions for the 25 schools that report data, compared to the 15,853 completions that have been reported to the state's Office of Higher Education from all the private occupational schools. This is a considerable difference.

In addition, none of the noncredit certificates awarded by the community colleges are reported to IPEDS because these certificate programs do not meet federal student aid requirements. Program review staff obtained a partial count of the community college noncredit certificate completions for 2013 from BOR. When added to the IPEDS (for-credit) number the total certificate completions jump from about 2,000 to over 5,000.<sup>16</sup> Thus, for the approximately 23,000 certificates awarded in Connecticut in AY 13, at least 52 percent of the certificates are not reported to IPEDS.

Aside from the data problems cited above, state-to-state comparisons using IPEDS data are questionable because some public certificate programs that are noncredit in one state (and not counted in IPEDS) may be for-credit in another (and counted in IPEDS).

**Only data source for comparisons.** Although the data are incomplete, IPEDS is still the most comprehensive source by which to compare certificate completions among states. IPEDS data has been used recently in an interim report being used to develop a postsecondary education strategic master plan for Connecticut.<sup>17</sup> At best, the IPEDS data below regarding completions may be regarded as a minimum number of sub-baccalaureate certificates that have been awarded in Connecticut.

**What Is Known About Connecticut’s Certificate Completion Rate?**



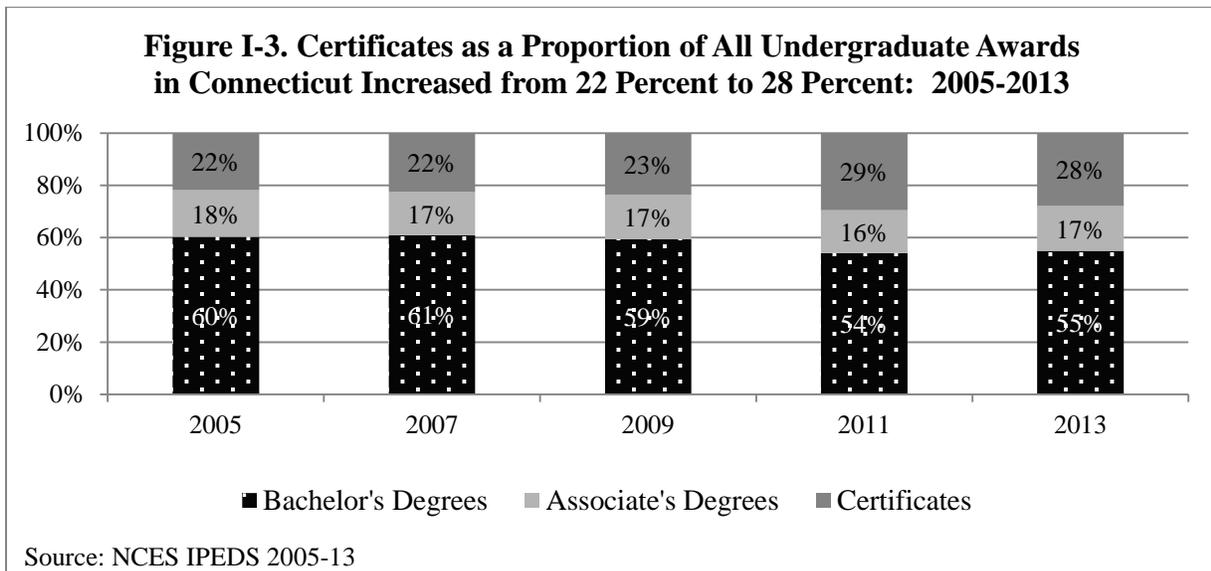
**Certificate awards have increased.** Figure I-2 shows the number of certificates awarded between 2005 and 2013 divided into three categories based on the length of the program: less than one academic year; at least one but less than two academic years; and at least

<sup>16</sup> BOR’s administrative systems do not provide a reliable count of noncredit certificates. The numbers included here are verifiable but undercount the true number. See Chapter II for further explanation.

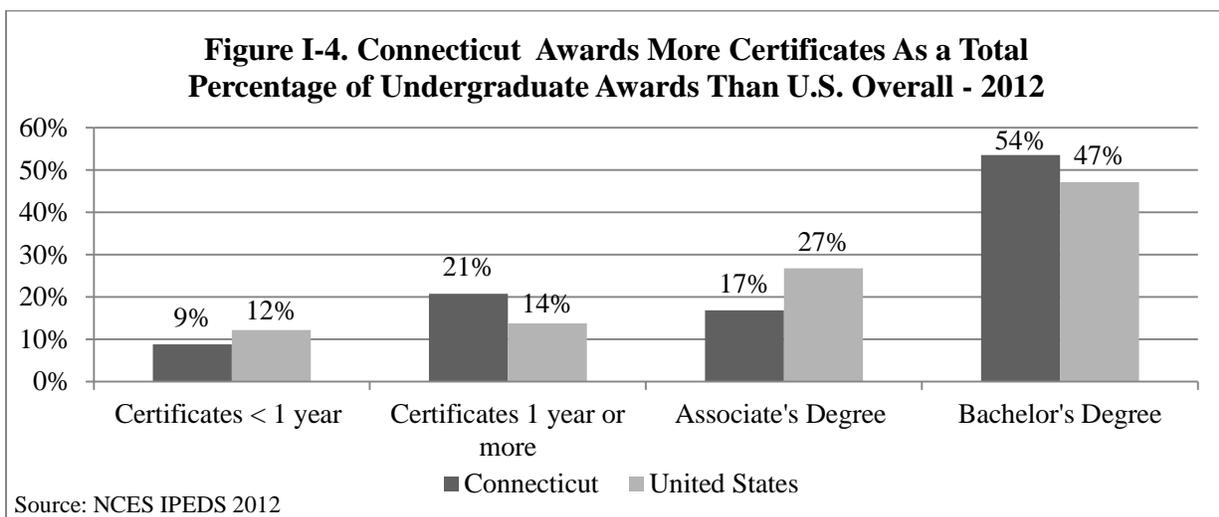
<sup>17</sup> National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), *A Strategic Master Plan for Connecticut Postsecondary Education*, Interim Report, submitted to Planning Commission for Higher Education, January 21, 2014. Note – PRI staff developed certificate completion numbers differ from NCHEMS because NCHEMS only included degree-granting institutions.

two but less than four academic years. It shows that the total number of certificates awarded has increased 81 percent and the majority of awards (64 percent in 2013) are in the mid-term category.

The total number of postsecondary undergraduate awards (bachelors, associates, and certificates) has increased 41 percent since 2005. As shown in Figure I-3, however, the proportion of certificates awarded has increased at a faster rate than other undergraduate awards, as the relative percentage of associate's and bachelor's degrees has declined. Certificates represent 28 percent of all undergraduate awards in 2013; associate's degrees were 17 percent and bachelor's, 55 percent.



Connecticut confers more certificates as a percentage of all undergraduate awards compared to the U.S. overall, as shown in Figure I-4. Connecticut produces more certificates that are earned in one year or more compared to the proportion in the nation and fewer certificates that are earned in less than one year.



Almost all of the public institutions that award sub-baccalaureate certificates, both nationally and in Connecticut, are community colleges. Nationally, community colleges award the most certificates but in Connecticut most certificates are awarded by for-profit private occupational schools. The nonprofit colleges award less than 5 percent of all certificates both nationally and in Connecticut.<sup>18</sup>

There are also regional differences. For-profit institutions tend to be the main provider of certificates in certain parts of the U.S. Tables I-4 and I-5 show, respectively, the states where for-profit institutions award the largest share of certificates and where public community colleges award the highest share of certificates. Most (seven of 10) of the states where for-profit providers predominate, including Connecticut, are located in the Northeast. Most (six of 10) of the states where community colleges award more certificates are located in the southern part of the U.S.

<b>Table I-4. For-Profit Institutions Award a Larger Share of Certificates in the Northeastern U.S.</b>		<b>Table I-5. Public Community Colleges Award a Larger Share of Certificates in the Southern U.S.</b>	
<i>State</i>	<i>For-Profits Share of Certificate Awards</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Public Community College Share of Certificate Awards</i>
New Jersey	87.0%	Wisconsin	84.2%
Nevada	86.8%	Arkansas	82.5%
Rhode Island	82.4%	Kentucky	82.3%
Connecticut	75.3%	North Carolina	81.9%
Massachusetts	67.9%	Georgia	78.7%
Maryland	67.7%	South Dakota	78.5%
Missouri	66.4%	South Carolina	77.4%
New York	65.9%	Minnesota	76.3%
Pennsylvania	65.5%	Louisiana	73.9%
Texas	65.2%	Washington	72.3%

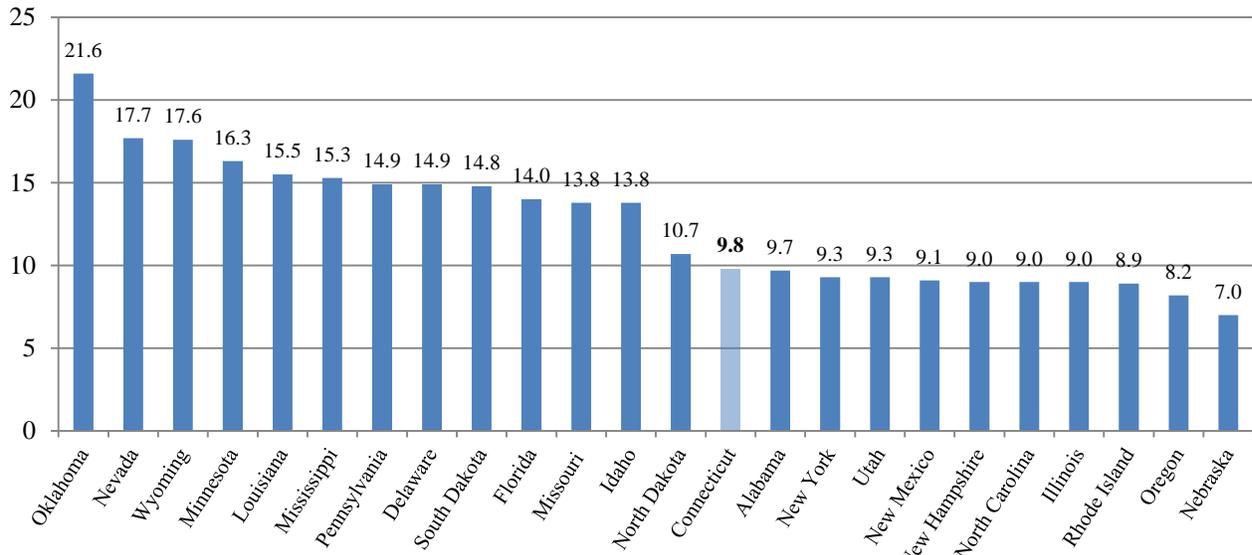
Source: Carnevale, A. P., Rose, S. J., & Hanson, A. R. 2012 *Certificates: Gateway to Gainful Employment and College Degrees*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. Based on IPEDS 2010 data.

### **What Percentage of Connecticut’s Population has Educational Certificates as the Highest Level of Educational Attainment and How Does that Compare to Other States?**

Federal data sources on the prevalence of sub-baccalaureate certificates in the population on a state-by-state level are somewhat dated. The most recent data that could be found was for 2008, as shown in Figure I-5. The chart illustrates that 9.8 percent of Connecticut’s population has a certificate as their highest degree attained. This was lower than the national average (12 percent) and placed Connecticut 11<sup>th</sup> from the bottom.

<sup>18</sup> The national figures for each type of institutions’ share of certificate awards are: Community colleges 51 percent; private for-profit 45 percent, and private nonprofit 4 percent. Source: NCES IPEDS 2010

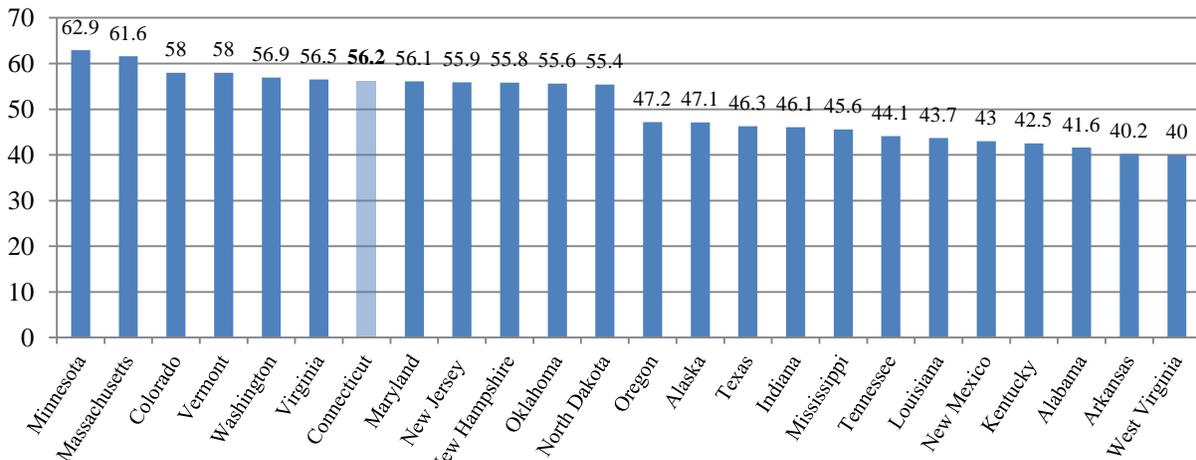
**Figure I-5. Percent of 25-64 Year Olds with Certificates, Top and Bottom 12 States, 2008**



Source: NECHMS., *A Strategic Master Plan for Connecticut Postsecondary Education, Interim Report*, Slide 65 based on U.S. Census Bureau 2008 SIPP survey

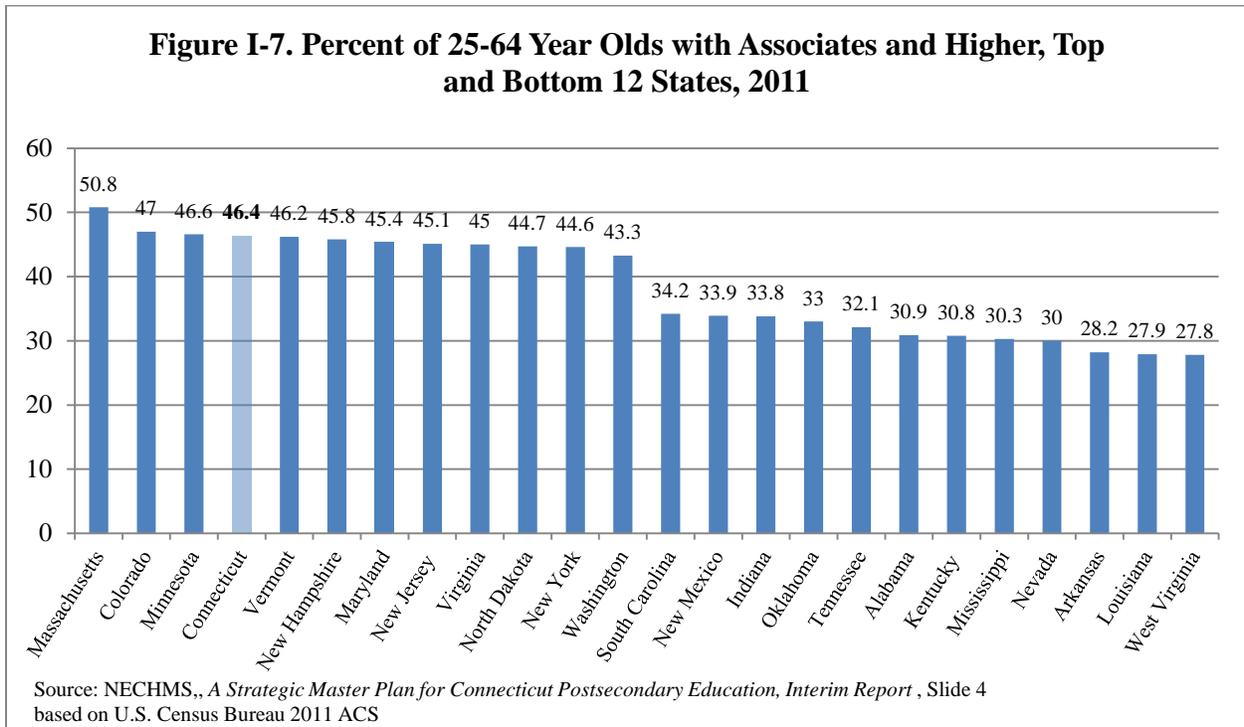
If the goal of the state is to ensure that a large number of its citizens have a postsecondary educational credential, it should be noted that Connecticut has relatively high postsecondary educational attainment as a whole. This tends to mitigate the lower certificate attainment ranking. As illustrated in Figure I-6, Connecticut has a high percentage of postsecondary awards (56 percent), when associate's and bachelor's degree holders are added to those with certificates. Based on 2008 data, Connecticut ranked seventh in the nation in educational attainment when all postsecondary credentials are considered.

**Figure I-6. Percent of 25-64 Year Olds with Certificates and Higher, Top and Bottom 12 States, 2008**



Source: NECHMS., *A Strategic Master Plan for Connecticut Postsecondary Education, Interim Report*, Slide 66 based on U.S. Census Bureau 2008 SIPP survey

Figure I-7 presents more recent data on educational attainment excluding certificates. It shows that just over 46 percent of Connecticut citizens aged 25 to 64 have an associate’s degree or higher. On this measure, Connecticut ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in the nation.



Concerns about the rising amount of student debt coupled with low completion rates have prompted the federal government to enact a series of measures that are intended to strengthen federal oversight of certain certificate providers. These concerns are examined in the next chapter on federal oversight and accountability.



### Oversight and Accountability

This chapter describes the role of the federal government in overseeing and regulating certificate providers. In addition, an overview of the state agencies that have a role in certificate production, oversight, and workforce demand assessment is also provided.

#### What are the Main Elements of Federal Oversight?

There are three main elements of federal oversight that concern this study. They include: 1) the criteria set by the U.S. Department of Education for an institution to become eligible to participate in the Federal Student Aid (FSA) program;<sup>19</sup> 2) the FSA requirement that eligible institutions report certain demographic and student debt data to a federal database (known as IPEDs); and 3) the mandate that schools participating in the FSA program disclose student cost and completion rates to students and potential students. Each of these requirements is discussed in more detail in this chapter. It is important to note, federal oversight in these three areas only applies to institutions that participate in FSA and only for those programs meeting certain criteria within those institutions. Schools that forego FSA are not bound by the program's rules.

#### *What Postsecondary Schools in Connecticut are Eligible to Participate in the Federal Student Aid Program?*

The federal government plays a very large role in providing financial aid, which gives millions of students the opportunity to acquire a postsecondary education. In order for a postsecondary institution to qualify for the FSA program, a school must establish its eligibility under Title IV of the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, as amended, and enter into a Program Participation Agreement (PPA) with the United States Department of Education. Establishing eligibility also includes a mandate for an institution to be accredited by a federally approved accrediting body; be authorized to by the state to operate; and *admit as a regular student* only individuals with a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent, or individuals beyond the age of compulsory school attendance in the state where the institution is located. An institution loses eligibility to receive Title IV funds under the program if it fails to maintain its academic accreditation.

It is important for schools to be able to offer student financial aid because a student who qualifies for financial aid can potentially enroll with very few of their own personal resources. It also provides a revenue stream for schools, with program rules allowing for-profit schools, otherwise known as proprietary schools, to receive up to 90 percent of their revenue from the FSA program. However, not all institutions, even those that would qualify, seek to participate in

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<sup>19</sup> Federal student aid programs Title IV are: Federal Family Education Loan Program i.e., (Federal Stafford Student Loan (subsidized and un-subsidized)), Federal Perkins Student Loan, Federal Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students, and Federal Supplemental Loan for Students) Federal Campus-Based Grants (Federal Supplemental Education Opportunity Grant and the Federal Pell Grant.

FSA. Reasons for not participating include accreditation requirements and federal reporting requirements, both being costly and time consuming for institutions.

Under federal regulation, three types of postsecondary institutions are eligible:

- institutions of higher education;
- proprietary institutions of higher education; and
- postsecondary vocational institutions.

By law, an institution of higher education or a postsecondary vocational institution can be either public or private but must be nonprofit. A proprietary institution of higher education must always be private and for profit. In addition, a school can participate in all the FSA programs provided the school offers the appropriate type of eligible program (see Table II-1). The table lists those institutions participating in the FSA program in Connecticut in parenthesis.

### ***What Certificate Programs in Connecticut’s Public Colleges Meet the Title IV Funding Criteria?***

Since Connecticut’s community colleges play a significant role in offering for-credit and noncredit certificate programs, in terms of the public higher education system, PRI staff focused on them. While all community colleges participate in the FSA program, only students enrolled in community college for-credit certificate programs are eligible to receive it. Financial aid is unavailable to students enrolled in noncredit certificate programs offered by community colleges since these programs do not meet the criteria summarized earlier in this section. Thus, gainful employment data must be reported only for students enrolled in for-credit programs because those programs are FSA eligible.

### ***How Many Proprietary Schools in Connecticut Meet the Title IV Funding Criteria?***

As noted previously, there are 57 private occupational schools in Connecticut, of which only 10 schools (18 percent) are eligible to receive Title IV-funds. All of the 10 schools that are Title IV eligible are considered for profit (i.e., proprietary schools). A complete list of private occupational schools, including those eligible to receive Title IV funds, can be found in Appendix A.

### ***What Information Do Title IV Eligible Schools have to Report to the U.S. Department of Education?***

**Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).** This is the core postsecondary education data collection program for the U.S. Department of Education. It contains nine interrelated survey components that are collected over three seasonal periods each year. The completion of all IPEDS surveys is mandatory for all institutions participating in the FSA program, but only for those programs that are Title IV eligible. Data collection efforts began in 1993.

The data system contains a number of measures that provide a more comprehensive picture of an institution, and allows comparisons across Title IV-eligible institutions. Some of

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the data that must be reported include: institutional characteristics; student enrollment and completion data; student costs to attend; and amounts of financial aid granted. However, the system does not capture information on students enrolled in full-credit programs if they do not attend full time, those enrolled in noncredit community college programs because they are not eligible for Title IV funding, or from proprietary schools that do not participate in Title IV funding. In Connecticut, this includes more than half the students that are receiving certificates. Therefore, information on a major portion of students enrolled in, and completing, sub-baccalaureate certificate programs is not reported to IPEDS.

<b>Table II-1. Postsecondary Institutions Eligible to Apply for Title IV funding and Participate in the Federal Student Aid Program</b>	
<i>Type</i>	<i>Must Offer These Programs</i>
Institution of Higher Education  (CT Public Colleges and nonprofit Colleges and Universities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Associate’s, Bachelor’s, graduate or professional degree; <i>or</i></li> <li>• At least a two-year degree that is acceptable for full credit toward a bachelor’s degree; <i>or</i></li> <li>• At least a one academic year training program that leads to a certificate or other nondegree recognized credential and prepares students for <b>gainful employment in a recognized occupation.</b></li> </ul>
Proprietary Institution of Higher Education  (10 Private Occupational Schools in Connecticut)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot receive more than 90% of its revenues from Title IV funds.</li> <li>• Must provide training for <b>gainful employment in a recognized occupation; or</b></li> <li>• Have provided a program leading to a baccalaureate degree in liberal arts continuously since Jan. 1, 2009 (with continuous accreditation since Oct. 1, 2007 or earlier).</li> <li>• Programs must meet criteria in at least one category: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide at least a 15-week undergraduate program of 600 clock hours, 16 semester or trimester hours, or 24 quarter hours. May admit students without an associate degree or equivalent.</li> <li>○ Provide at least a 10-week program of 300 clock hours, 8 semester or trimester hours, or 12 quarter hours. Must be a graduate/professional program, or admit only students with an associate degree or equivalent.</li> <li>○ Provide at least a 10-week program of 300-599 clock hours, must admit at least some students who do not have an associate degree or equivalent, and must meet specific qualitative standards (eligible only for Direct Loan participation)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Postsecondary Vocational Institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must provide training for <b>gainful employment in a recognized occupation.</b></li> <li>• Programs must meet criteria in at least once category: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Provide at least a 15-week undergraduate program of 600 clock hours, 16 semester or trimester hours, or 24 quarter hours. May admit students without an associate degree or equivalent.</li> <li>○ Provide at least a 10-week program of 300 clock hours, 8 semester or trimester hours, or 12 quarter hours. Must be a graduate/professional program, or admit only students with an associate degree or equivalent.</li> <li>○ Provide at least a 10-week program of 300-599 clock hours, must admit at least some students who do not have an associate degree or equivalent, and must meet specific qualitative standards (eligible only for Direct Loan participation)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Source: School Eligibility and Operations, FSA HB June 2013, pages 2-4.	

**Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act.** In compliance with the Student Right to Know Act (P.L. 101-542) adopted in 1990, all colleges and universities receiving Title IV funds are required by the U.S. Department of Education to report certain information to students, employees and prospective students. This act requires disclosure of information about graduation or completion rates for certificate- or degree-seeking full-time students to current and prospective students. Completion of the Graduation Rate Survey (part of IPEDS reporting for Title IV institutions) meets the reporting requirements of the law.

***What Does the Term “Gainful Employment in a Recognized Occupation” Mean?***

Growing concerns by the U.S. Department of Education led to the development of regulations beginning in 2009 to better measure the value of certificates earned by students who had received federal financial aid because they were enrolled in a program that led to “gainful employment in a recognized occupation” (a term used since 1965, but never defined). The need for regulations was prompted by a belief that a number of students were receiving financial aid for gainful employment programs that:

- were not training students in the skills they need to obtain and maintain jobs in the occupation for which the program purports to provide training;
- were providing training for an occupation for which low wages do not justify program costs;
- had a high student withdraw rate because relatively large numbers of students enroll but few complete the program, which often leads to students defaulting on their loans; and
- leave students with high levels of loan debt in relation to their earnings.

In Connecticut, the gainful employment regulations would apply only to for-credit certificate programs offered by community colleges, independent nonprofit colleges and universities, and ten of the 57 postsecondary schools that participate in Title IV funds.

After a court challenge and a June 2012 court ruling that struck down one of the financial aid metrics (the 35 percent annual student loan repayment rate, which the judge called arbitrary) that institutions must meet in order to maintain eligibility for Title IV funds, the department requested certain gainful employment provisions be reinstated, which the court denied in March 2013. The department indicated it would drop efforts to revive the old rule and would instead develop a new one. The court decision only impacted the financial metrics used that would make an institution lose Title IV eligibility if they were not met. It did not affect the gainful employment student disclosure requirements for institutions, which became effective July 2011.

A website link to the disclosure information is required on every college or university web page referring to the gainful employment program. The regulations also require institutions to notify the department if they planned to add an additional gainful employment program to its list of Title IV eligible programs. In addition to disclosure information required under the 1990 Student Right to Know Act, since July 2011, each institution must also disclose for each of its gainful employment programs:

- name and U.S. Department of Labor's Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code of the occupations that the program prepares students to enter, along with links to occupational profiles on the U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Information Network (O\*NET) web site;
- on-time graduation rate for students completing the program;
- tuition and fees charged to a student for completing the program within normal time;
- typical costs for books and supplies (unless those costs are included as part of tuition and fees), and the cost of room and board, if applicable;
- job placement rate for students completing the program; and
- median loan debt incurred by students who completed the program (separately by Title IV loans and by other educational debt to include both private educational loans and institutional financing) as provided by the education secretary.

Currently, if a certificate program has fewer than 30 students enrolled, the institution does not have to report some of the information for the program in order to preserve student confidentiality.

New regulations, which contained a revised financial performance metric – a ratio of the amount of debt graduates from a postsecondary program took on compared their earnings - as well as additional disclosure requirements, were published in October 2014. However, a lawsuit was filed in federal district court on November 6, 2014 seeking repeal of the regulations.<sup>20</sup> To date, no ruling has been issued by the court.

Data on various program measures for Connecticut postsecondary schools that participate in FSA were collected by the U.S. Department of Education and used to provide information to schools to see where they stand in relation to the metrics. The data are available on the department's Gainful Employment website. Key measures in the Gainful Employment data set included information on 10 private postsecondary occupational schools and two barber/hairdresser schools in Connecticut (reported for 2011) and showed:

- repayment rate, which measures the percent of gainful employment program's former students who are repaying their federal student loans, regardless of whether the former students completed the program. This ranged from about 12 percent for a program in culinary arts to 75 percent for graduates of a massage therapy certificate program; no data was reported for 36 programs;
- debt-to-earnings annual rate, which ranged from 8.23 percent for a certificate program in motorcycle maintenance and repair to 1.43 to a massage therapy; and
- median Title IV loan amounts, which ranged from a low of \$700 to a high of \$16,535 for a certificate in licensed practical nursing.

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<sup>20</sup> A lawsuit was filed November 6<sup>th</sup> by the Association of Private Sector Colleges and Universities in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia alleging the regulation exceed the U.S. Department of Education's statutory authority and are unconstitutional.

## What State Entities Oversee the Postsecondary Education System in Connecticut, Measure Workforce Demand and Develop Alignment Strategies?

The rest of this chapter describes the state organizational structure that offers for-credit and noncredit certificate programs to students, identifies who is responsible for overseeing and approving certificate programs, and measures employer demand for program graduates.

**The Board of Regents for Higher Education (BOR)** governs seventeen Connecticut state colleges and universities: four state universities, 12 community colleges, and Charter Oak State College, Connecticut's only public, online, degree-granting institution.

A particular focus of this study, in the public higher education system, is on the state's community colleges, since they are the primary place that sub-baccalaureate certificate programs are offered in the public arena. Connecticut's 12 two-year public colleges are shown in the map in Figure II-1.

Figure II-1. Names and Locations of Connecticut's Community Colleges.



Source: BOR

Community colleges provide two types of educational programs: for-credit and noncredit. Credit programs can lead to certificates or associate degrees and require a high school diploma or GED for admission. Certificate programs that are credit-bearing require formal approval by the board of regents before being offered by a community college. Noncredit courses are typically classified as either workforce or personal development and do not require either notification from the

college to the board of regents, or the board's approval. The focus of this study is on for-credit and noncredit workforce development certificate programs.

**The Office of Higher Education (OHE)** was established in July 2012 to provide consumer protection and administer programs supporting Connecticut's higher education system. Those programs include:

1. institutional and academic program review and approval for independent institutions, as well as private occupational, hospital-based schools, and hairdressing/cosmetology schools;
2. student financial aid programs for Connecticut undergraduates, in addition to aid programs for potential teachers; and
3. programs for students through the Minority Advancement Program, the Alternate Route to Certification, the Commission on Community Service, the Connecticut - Germany Student Exchange, and Teacher Quality Partnership Grants.

As noted earlier, for this study, the PRI committee focused on certificate programs offered by the nonprofit colleges and universities and the 57 private occupational schools and OHE's oversight responsibilities. OHE is responsible for initial and ongoing approval of the schools' operations and programs.

**The Connecticut Department of Labor (DOL)** is the state's lead agency for producing information and statistics on the economy, workforce and occupation demand, and growth in industry sectors. It also is responsible for administering a variety of federal and state employment service programs, as well as regulating and enforcing working conditions, wage standards, and labor relations.

In terms of this study, DOL analyzed data from the P20 WIN system in order to provide information, in aggregate, on certificate completers enrolled in for-credit community college programs and their earnings before and after certificate completion.<sup>21</sup>

**The Office of Workforce Competitiveness (OWC)**, located within DOL, serves as the governor's principal workforce development policy advisor. OWC collaborates with multiple partners to: align resources; coordinate employment, education and training programs; and promote strategies that meet Connecticut industry's projected job growth needs. OWC staffs and provides technical assistance to the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC).

**The Connecticut and Employment Training Commission (CETC)** was created in 1989 with a statutory mandate to plan, coordinate, and evaluate training programs. CETC is the

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<sup>21</sup> The Preschool through 20 and Workforce Information Network (P20 WIN) allows for inter-agency data sharing of longitudinal student data to assess how individuals successfully navigate educational pathways into the workforce. Participating agencies are the Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education, Connecticut Department of Labor, and State Department of Education.

State Workforce Investment Board under the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and state statute. Commission members represent Connecticut businesses, key state agencies, regional/local public entities, organized labor, community-based organizations, and other key stakeholders.

In August 2011, CETC was restructured administratively, requiring members to have a lead role in proposing policy and strategy to coordinate workforce efforts. Currently, the commission provides workforce-related policy and planning guidance to the governor and General Assembly. It also promotes coordination of the state's workforce-related activities, and provides some funding, through regional Workforce Investment Boards, for individuals seeking to obtain a workforce development certificate.

### Combined Overview and Individual Profiles

This chapter describes and analyzes certificate programs offered at the community colleges on a for-credit and noncredit basis, as well as programs available at the state's postsecondary private occupational schools. The chapter begins with a combined overview that compares the programs at the private occupational schools to the community colleges and then presents individual profiles for each entity.

To perform this analysis, the program review committee staff relied on data provided by the Board of Regents for Higher Education for the 12 community colleges and the Office of Higher Education for 46 private occupational schools that participated. Due to the different systems, including data the two state agencies oversee, there were variations in the type of information collected. Therefore, although this chapter includes profiles of the two types of certificates offered (i.e., for credit and noncredit) by the community colleges and the private occupational schools (noncredit only), the same data could not be presented across all of the colleges and schools.

### Certificate Program Data Findings in Brief

In general, the data show that private occupational schools accounted for about three-quarters of the approximately 25,000 certificate program enrollments and 19,000 awards in academic year 2013 (AY 2013). The majority of students enrolled in either public or private programs are under the age of thirty. The private occupational schools' student bodies were more racially and ethnically diverse than those of the for-credit community college programs.

There is some overlap in broadly defined instructional areas among the community college programs and the private occupational schools, especially in the health professions. However, when the certificate programs were examined by more specific occupational areas, there was very little overlap among the largest programs.

In addition, most private occupational school programs are shorter than community college programs. Furthermore, while there are some private occupational schools programs that have a lower overall tuition compared to similar programs at community colleges, the average cost to the student per credit (or equivalent credit when converted from course hours to credits) is higher among the private occupational schools. This may not be surprising as the private occupational schools do not benefit from any state subsidy and are largely for-profit organizations. Still, examples of striking price differences between the community college and private occupational schools can be found among several common certificate programs and some examples are provided in this chapter.

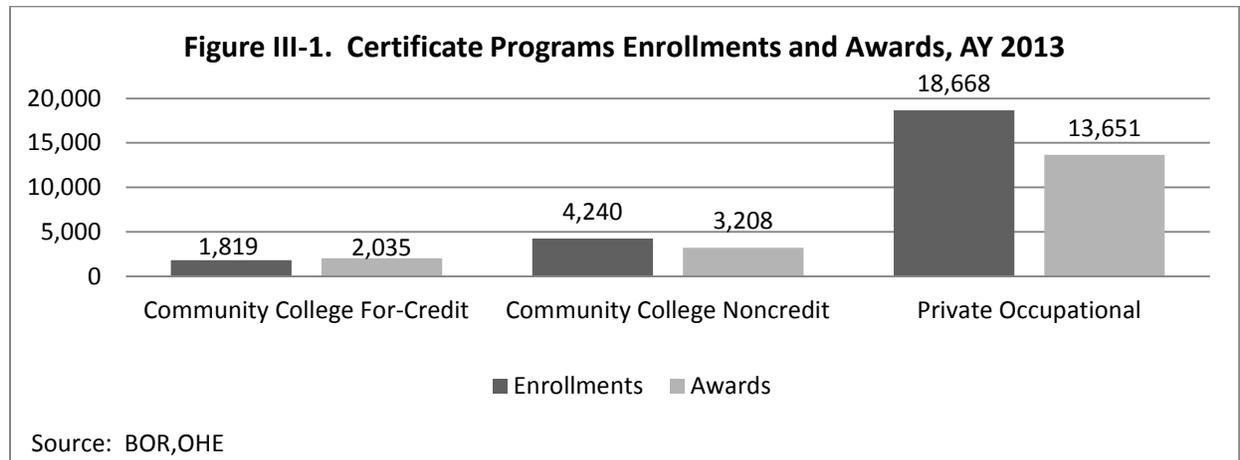
### Overview

**Enrollments and awards.** In AY 2013, private occupational schools, by far, enrolled and awarded the majority of the certificates in Connecticut, as illustrated in Figure III-1. About

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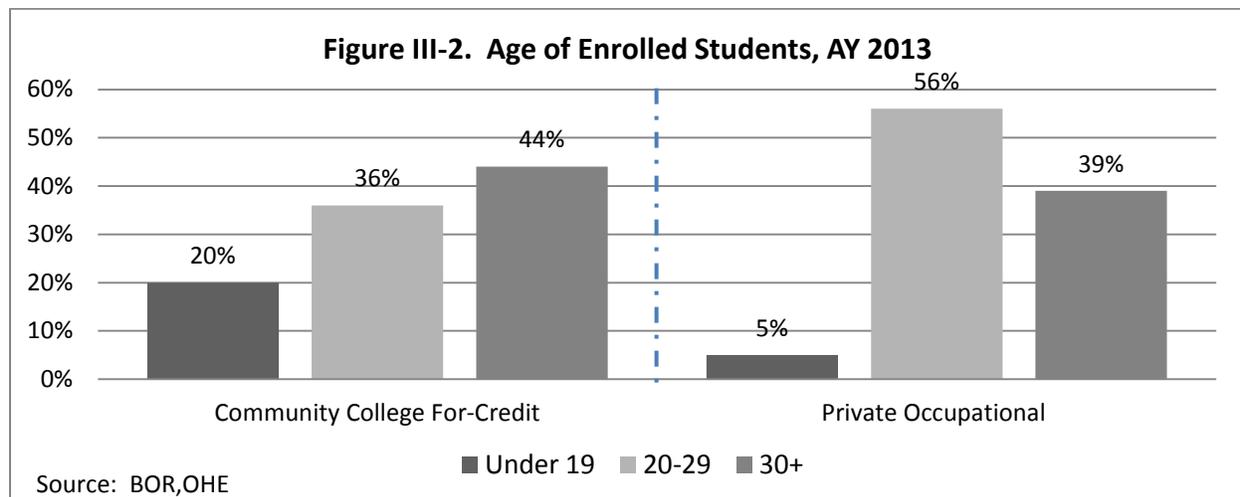
three-quarters of all student enrollments and awards were from private occupational schools. For-credit programs at community colleges enrolled the least amount of students (7 percent) and not surprisingly, awarded the fewest certificates (11 percent).

It should be noted that student enrollment data for both the community college for-credit and noncredit certificate programs are independent of the award data. This means student completion rates cannot be calculated using this data. The private occupational school data, though, is for the same student cohort, and the average completion rate is about 73 percent across all programs.

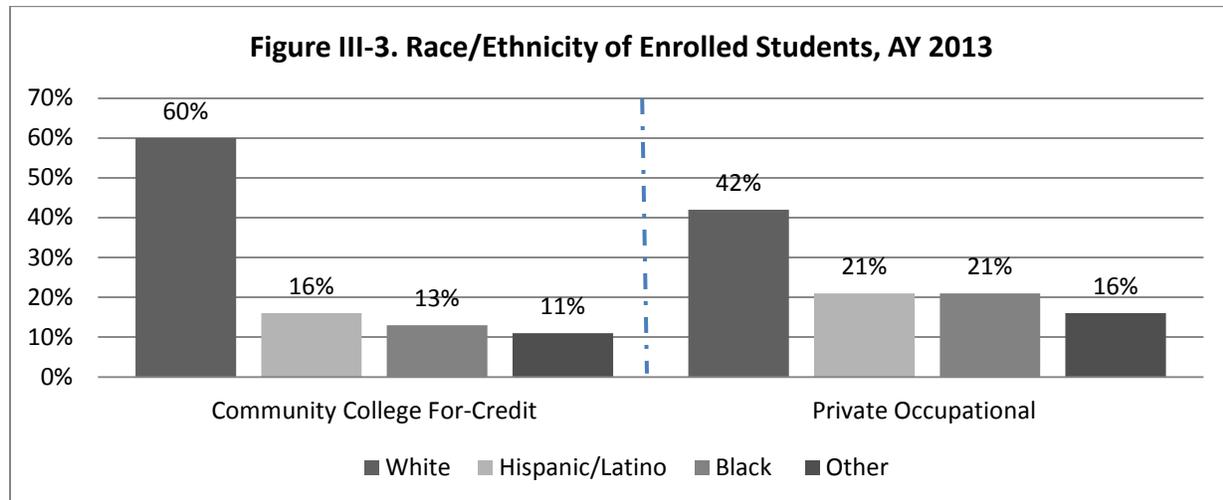


**Age, gender, and race/ethnicity.** The private occupational schools and the community college for-credit certificate programs show some differences in demographic characteristics among enrolled students. (As noted earlier, BOR was unable to provide student demographic information for students enrolled in noncredit programs.)

Both private occupational schools and the for-credit community college programs enroll about 40 percent of students who are over 30 as displayed in Figure III-2. However, most private occupational students are in their 20s, while only 5 percent are teenagers. Twenty percent of for-credit students are teens and 36 percent are in their 20s.



The private occupational schools tend to be more diverse, with at least half of enrolled students identified as being a member of a minority racial or ethnic group, as conveyed in Figure III-3. The comparable share among the community college for-credit programs was 35 percent.<sup>22</sup>



**Overlap among the most common instructional areas.** Program review committee staff examined the certificate program data to identify areas of overlap between the private occupational schools and the community colleges. The federal government developed a classification system (called the Classification of Instructional Programs, commonly referred to as CIP) that allows for the grouping of similar degree and certificate programs across the country despite variations in name and content. The classification methodology allows for groupings by broad instructional study areas, as well as groupings related to specific occupations.

Table III-1 compares the percentage of certificate students that fall into the five most common broadly defined instructional areas for private occupational schools and the community colleges for AY 2013. The top five areas include 75 percent of all for-credit community college certificate enrollments and over 90 percent of the noncredit community college and private occupational school certificate enrollments.

On this general level, there appears to be significant overlap in the Health Professions category. It comprises 68 percent of the noncredit community college certificate students, almost half of the private occupational schools' students, and about one-fifth of the for-credit community colleges' students. Other areas of overlap include Personal and Culinary Services among the noncredit programs offered at community colleges and the private occupational schools and Business Management and Engineering Technology among the for-credit and noncredit programs at community colleges. On the other hand, about 30 percent of private occupational school students are enrolled in programs in Mechanic and Repair Technology, Transportation, and Construction Trades. The community colleges offer few to no programs in these areas.

<sup>22</sup> The totals in the figure add to 100 percent and include "unknowns" in the Other category. The unknowns were subtracted from the total to calculate the percentage of students in the remaining categories.

<b>Instructional Area</b>	<i>For-Credit Community College</i>		<i>Noncredit Community College</i>		<i>Private Occupational Schools</i>	
	<b>Top Five Instructional Categories</b>	<b>% of Enrolled Students</b>	<b>Top 5 Instructional Categories</b>	<b>% of Enrolled Students</b>	<b>Top 5 Instructional Categories</b>	<b>% of Enrolled Students</b>
Health Professions	✓	21%	✓	68%	✓	49%
Family and Consumer	✓	20%				
Business Management	✓	17%	✓	11%		
Engineering Tech	✓	13%	✓	5%		
Precision Production	✓	5%				
Personal And Culinary Services			✓	5%	✓	11%
Computer and Information Sciences			✓	5%		
Mechanic and Repair Tech					✓	15%
Transportation					✓	11%
Construction Trades					✓	4%
<i>Total % of Students</i>		<i>75%</i>		<i>93%</i>		<i>90%</i>

Source: OHE, BOR.

*Overlap among 10 most common occupational areas.* When certificate programs are classified and analyzed in more detail by specific *occupational area*, less overlap among the community colleges and private occupational schools was evident. Every certificate was organized into an occupational area for each institution and arrayed by the number of enrollments to compare the 10 most common occupational areas. When organized by occupational area, there are usually only a few types of certificates, and sometimes only one type of certificate program, that fall(s) into this more defined typology. The top 10 occupational areas represent 54 percent of all students enrolled in community college for-credit programs, 70 percent in community college noncredit, and 72 percent in private occupational schools.

Among the 30 occupational areas examined (top 10 for each), there were only two areas that overlapped. Nursing Assistant/Aide had the most student enrollments for both private occupational schools (15 percent) and noncredit community college programs (23 percent).

Bartender was the other occupational area, but was a much smaller program, accounting for about 6 percent of occupational school enrollments and 4 percent of noncredit community college enrollments. There was no overlap among the 10 most common occupational areas between the for-credit programs and those of the other institutions. Of course, there are other certificate programs that overlap among these schools and colleges but they are much smaller and are not among the top program enrollments.

**Program length.** Further differentiation of certificate programs among the community colleges and private occupational schools can be seen when the length of certificate programs is examined. (Private occupational school programs and noncredit programs contact hours were converted to credit hours to make the comparison.)<sup>23</sup> Most private occupational school programs are shorter than community college programs. Table III-2 shows the percent of approved certificate programs for private occupational schools and student enrollments in community colleges by credit range.

<i>Equivalent Credit Length*</i>	<i>Private Occupational School</i>	<i>For-Credit Community College</i>	<i>Noncredit Community College</i>
Less than 15 credits	65%	5%	21%
15 to 29 credits	5%	91%	29%
30 or more credits	30%	4%	50%

Source: OHE, BOR. (\*Contact hours for private occupational schools and noncredit community college programs were converted to equivalent credits for purposes of comparison. One credit is equivalent to 15 contact hours.)

The table indicates that most of the private occupational schools programs are less than 15 equivalent credits (or one college semester). In contrast, only 5 percent of for-credit community college students and 21 percent of noncredit community college students are enrolled in these short programs. The most popular programs for-credit community college programs are between 15 and 29 credits (i.e., six months to one year) and the most popular for-credit programs are over 30 or more credits (i.e., one year or more).

**Tuition range.** Table III-3 compares the range of tuition costs and the average cost per credit for certificate programs by equivalent credit length among the private occupational schools and the community colleges. The costs are for tuition only, and additional fees may apply at different schools. The ranges and average costs per credit are highly variable among the POS and noncredit community college programs, whereas the for-credit program ranges are linear because they have a standard in-state tuition cost in 2014 of \$143 per credit.

In general, the average cost per credit is higher among the private occupational schools. However, these schools do have some programs that have a lower overall tuition compared to the community colleges. For example, the lowest priced programs for the private occupational schools in the less than 15 credit hour category are less than the for-credit and noncredit community college programs. However, private occupational schools also have the highest costs at the high end of the ranges in each category. It should also be noted that in any tuition comparison, the state provides a subsidy to the community colleges that the private occupational

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<sup>23</sup> A three credit college course typically meets for three hours per week for 15 weeks and totals 45 hours.

schools do not get. The table also shows that the average per credit cost in noncredit programs is higher in each category than for-credit programs in the community colleges.

<b>Table III-3. Tuition Range by Credit Length, AY 2013</b>						
	<i>Private Occupational Schools</i>		<i>For-Credit Community College</i>		<i>Noncredit Community College</i>	
<b>Equivalent Credit Length*</b>	<b>Tuition Range</b>	<b>Average Cost per Credit</b>	<b>Tuition Range</b>	<b>Average Cost per Credit</b>	<b>Tuition Range</b>	<b>Average Cost per Credit</b>
Less than 15 Credits	\$50 - \$12,840	\$447	\$143 - \$2,002	\$143	\$71 - \$5,099	\$407
15 to 29 Credits	\$950 - \$17,640	\$337	\$2,145 - \$4,147	\$143	\$400 - \$4,000	\$219
30 Credits or More	\$3,600 - \$37,105	\$410	\$4,290 - \$8,437	\$143	\$527 - \$6,998	\$157

Source: OHE, BOR. (\* Contact hours for private occupational schools and noncredit community college programs were converted to equivalent credits for purposes of comparison. One credit is equivalent to 15 contact hours.)

**Specific tuition comparisons.** Table III-4 compares the tuition of selected certificate programs among the community colleges and private occupational schools. Average salary information is also provided. Direct tuition comparisons are somewhat challenging as some certificates that have the same name may have very different requirements. Where there was a significant difference in contact hours (or equivalent credits) the range of credit hours and costs have been provided. It should also be noted the length of the program does not always correspond with the cost of the program – that is, the longest program does not mean it is the costliest. It was not readily apparent why course hours (or equivalent credits) varied so much given that certificate programs with less hours still allowed graduates to sit for national certification (if applicable).

The table shows that there are two programs, Nursing Assistant and Phlebotomy, where the tuition could be cheaper at a private occupational school than the community colleges. However, for every other certificate program, there is a community college offering that is less expensive.

Several of the differences in price are striking. For example, tuition for a Culinary Arts program at a private occupational school can be over \$28,000 compared to just about \$4,300 at a community college. Similarly, a Paralegal certificate could cost about \$16,000 at a private school but could be obtained at community college for \$4,300. A Dental Assistant certificate could cost a student over \$17,000 at a private occupational school, but the most a student would pay for tuition at a community college is \$3,500.

**Table III-4. Tuition Comparisons for Selected Programs Between Private Occupational Schools and Community Colleges with Average Salary**

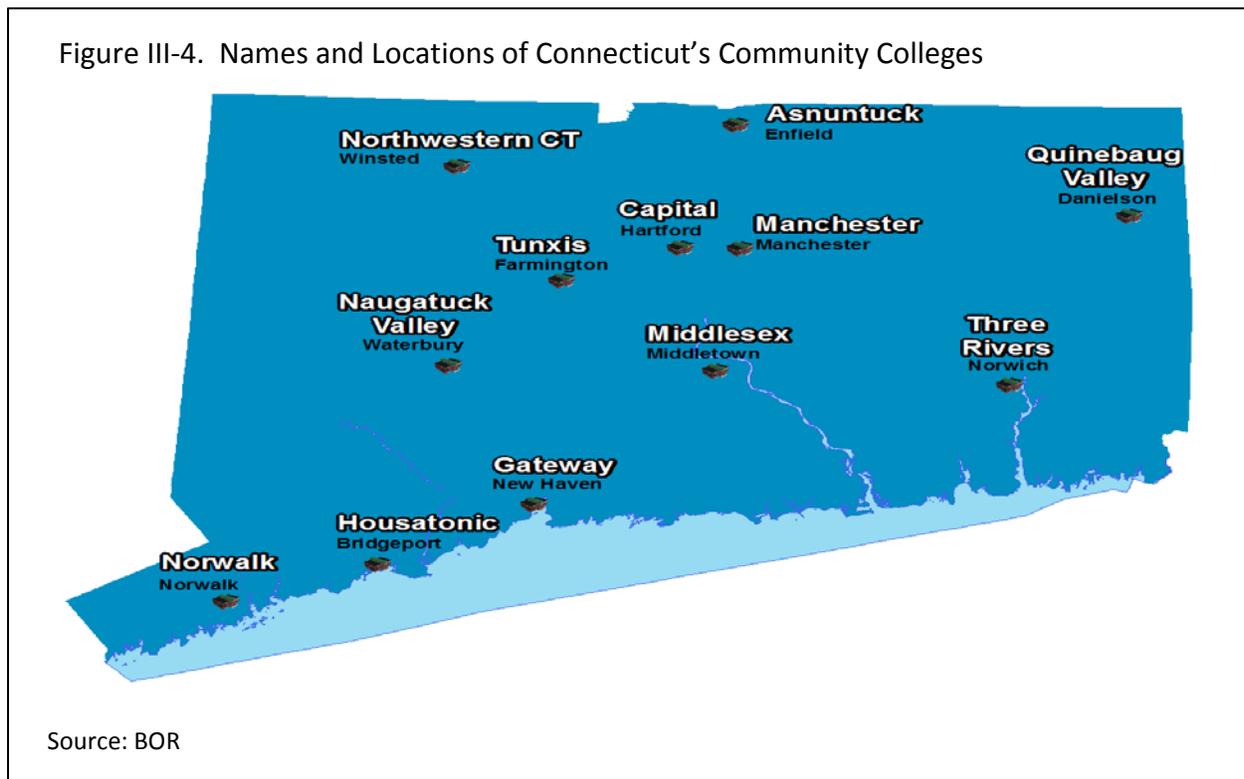
<i>Certificate Program</i>	<i>Private Occupational Schools*</i>	<i>Noncredit Community Colleges*</i>	<i>For-Credit Community Colleges</i>	<i>Average Salary</i>
Nursing Assistant	\$700 - \$1,130 (7+ credits)	\$799 - \$1,215 (7 to 9 credits)	n/a	\$31,336
Bartender	\$350 - \$495 (2 to 3 credits)	\$239 - \$295 (1 credit)	n/a	\$20,695
Phlebotomy	\$552 - \$1,100 (5 to 7 credits)	\$1,148 - \$2,739 (4 to 14 credits)	\$2,288 (16 credits)	\$35,272
Dental Assisting	\$1,400 - \$4,500 (5 to 7 credits)/ \$13,975 - \$17,995 (30 to 42 credits)	\$1,000 - \$3,499 (8 to 18 credits)	\$4,290 - \$4,433 (30 to 31 credits)	\$40,804
Culinary Arts	\$28,326 (38 credits)	n/a	\$3,575 - \$4,290 (25 to 30 credits)	\$51,698
Medical Assistant/ Assisting	\$15,450 - \$17,640 (28 to 58 credits)	\$5,024 (48 credits)	\$4,290 (30 credits)	\$34,105
Medical Coding	\$950 - \$3,125 (5 to 23 credits)/ \$12,975 - \$16,027 (Over 47 credits)	\$724 - \$1,495 (7 to 20 credits)	\$3,861 (27 credits)	\$40,123
Massage Therapy	\$10,080 - \$14,260 (40 to 53 credits)	\$6,990 (55 credits)	n/a	\$37,339
Paralegal	\$16,027 (47 credits)	n/a	\$3,432 - \$4,290 (24 - 30 credits)	\$53,255

Source: OHE, BOR, and some data from AY 2014 community college course catalogs  
 Average salary information from Connecticut DOL, Training and Education Planning System  
 \* Contact hours for private occupational schools and noncredit community college programs were converted to equivalent credits for purposes of comparison. One credit is equivalent to 15 contact hours.

## The Board of Regents for Higher Education: Community Colleges

The Board of Regents for Higher Education, through its 12-community college system, offers both for-credit and noncredit certificate programs. Data collected by the board differs between the two types of programs, with the board's data system capturing associate's degree and certificate programs on for-credit programs, while much of the noncredit data is located at the individual college level and it is not aggregated by the board. Thus, although PRI staff developed profiles on for-credit and noncredit programs, the information that the board was able to provide to PRI staff differs in some respects between the two types of programs. For example, gender and age information was available for students enrolled in for-credit programs, but was not available for those enrolled in noncredit programs.

As noted in the staff update to the committee in October, a primary focus of this study, in the public higher education system, is on the state's community colleges, since they are the primary place where sub-baccalaureate certificate public programs are offered. Figure III-4 shows the geographic location of Connecticut's 12 two-year public colleges.

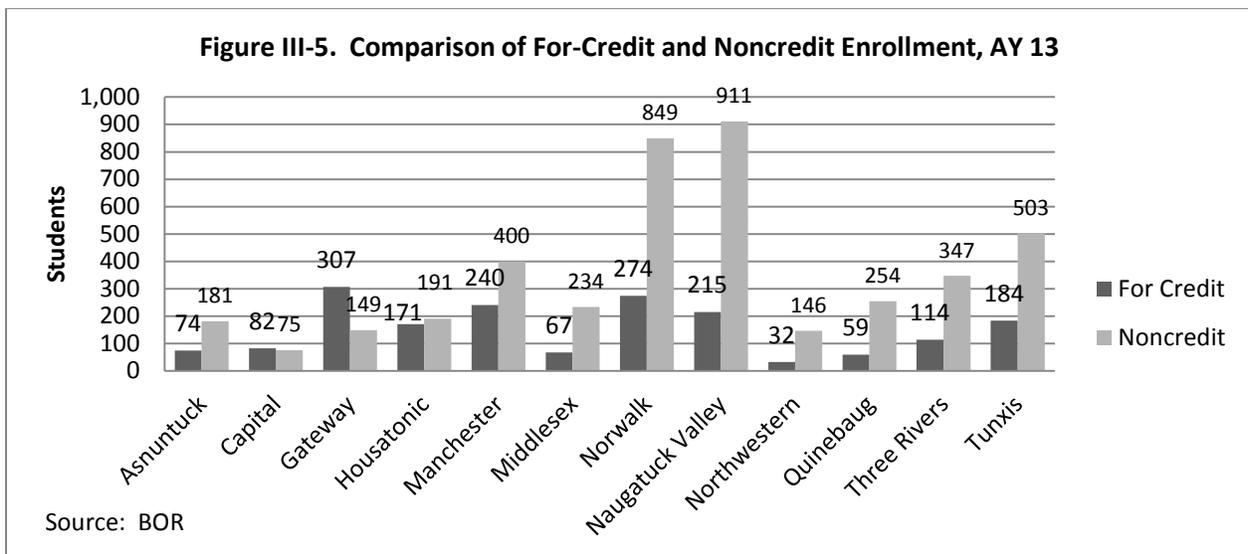


Community college credit programs can lead to certificates or associate's degrees and require a high school diploma or GED for admission. Certificate programs that are credit-bearing require formal approval by the board of regents before being offered by a community college. These programs are overseen by the academic dean of the college. Noncredit certificate programs, however, do not require either notification from the college to the board of regents, or the board's approval. Program oversight is the responsibility of each college's continuing education dean.

**Methods and data source.** As noted in the introduction, the board of regents provided PRI staff with community college certificate student enrollment and completion data for both for-credit and noncredit programs. However, there were several caveats attached to the data, as noted previously.

While collecting data for PRI staff, the board found that many noncredit student enrollments were not accounted for in its data system, nor were the total number of noncredit awards granted. As a result, the board indicated that the numbers reported to PRI staff likely underrepresent the noncredit certificate program activity that actually occurred at any given community college. The board indicated to PRI staff that it is working to correct this flaw in the system and expect to have more complete data by next year.

**Comparison of for-credit and noncredit enrollment by college.** Figure III-5 compares enrollment of students in for-credit and noncredit certificate programs by college. The figure shows that there is much variation among colleges in terms of both for-credit and noncredit enrollment - some offer very few programs overall, while others provide programs heavily weighted toward either for-credit or noncredit programs. For example, while Gateway Community College ranks number 10 out of the 12 colleges in number of students enrolled in noncredit certificate programs, it ranks number 1 in the number of for-credit program enrollment. Capital Community College does not high enrollment in either type of certificate program -- it ranks 8<sup>th</sup> on the number of students enrolled in for-credit programs, 12<sup>th</sup> on the number in noncredit programs, and 12<sup>th</sup> overall.



### Profile of For-Credit Community College Certificate Programs

**Enrollment and program length.** Overall, there were 1,819 students enrolled in 101 for-credit certificate programs during the AY 2013. During that same time period, there were 2,035 certificate awards granted. As shown in Table III-5, the twelve Connecticut Community Colleges offer three levels of academic credit-bearing certificate programs that vary in the number of credits that must be completed in order to receive the certificate. The overwhelming majority are 15-29 credits - certificates that a college-ready student attending full-time can

complete in one semester (15 credits) or one academic year (30 credits). The table also shows the number and percent of students enrolled in certificates programs by number of credits needed for completion.

<b>Table III-5. Enrollment by Certificate Program by Credits Required for Completion, AY 2013</b>		
<i>Certificate Length</i>	<i>Number of Students Enrolled</i>	<i>Percent of Total</i>
Less than 15 credits	95	5.%
15-29 credits	1,656	91%
30-59 credits	67	4%
Source: BOR		

**Full- or part-time attendance.** Table III-6 shows that of the 1,819 individuals enrolled in for-credit certificate programs, the majority were part-time students (71 percent) in the fall of 2012. Females comprised a greater portion of part-timers at 59 percent versus 41 percent of males. This is important because although the majority of certificate programs are designed to be completed in one year or less if taken on a full-time basis, the large number of part-time students shows that it is taking one or more years to complete a program, depending on the number of credits needed to graduate (as shown in Table III-5 above).

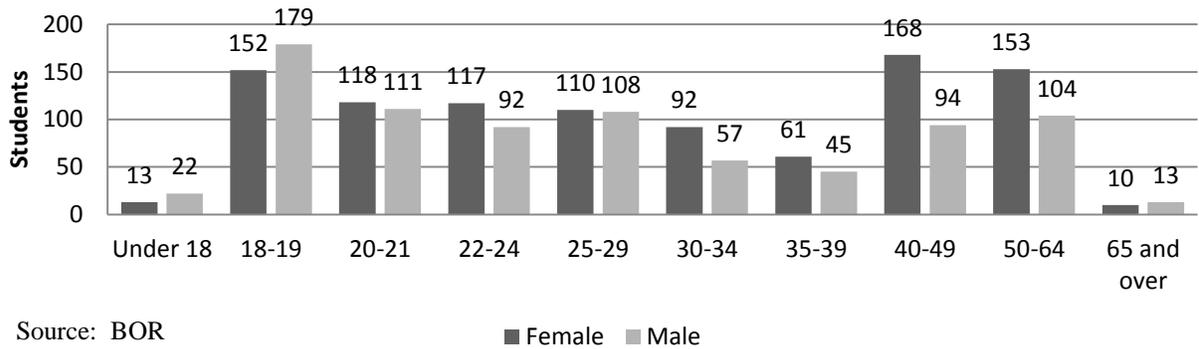
<b>Table III-6. Full- or Part-Time Student Enrollment by Gender, AY 2013.*</b>			
<i>Gender</i>	<i>Part Time</i>	<i>Full Time</i>	<i>Total</i>
Female	229	756	994
Male	291	532	825
Missing data = 9 students Source: BOR			

**Cost of for-credit certificates.** The cost of a for-credit certificate depends on the number of credit hours that must be completed by the student. In addition, the cost-per-credit-hour varies depending on whether the student is a Connecticut resident or resides out-of-state. For the fall of 2014, the cost per credit across all of the community colleges is \$143 for Connecticut residents. Thus, assuming in-state tuition, the tuition range for each credit range would be:

- 1 - 14 academic credits (less than a semester): \$143 - \$2,002;
- 15 - 29 academic credits (one to two semesters): \$2,145 - \$4,147; or
- 30 - 59 academic credits (two to four semesters): \$4,290 - \$8,437.

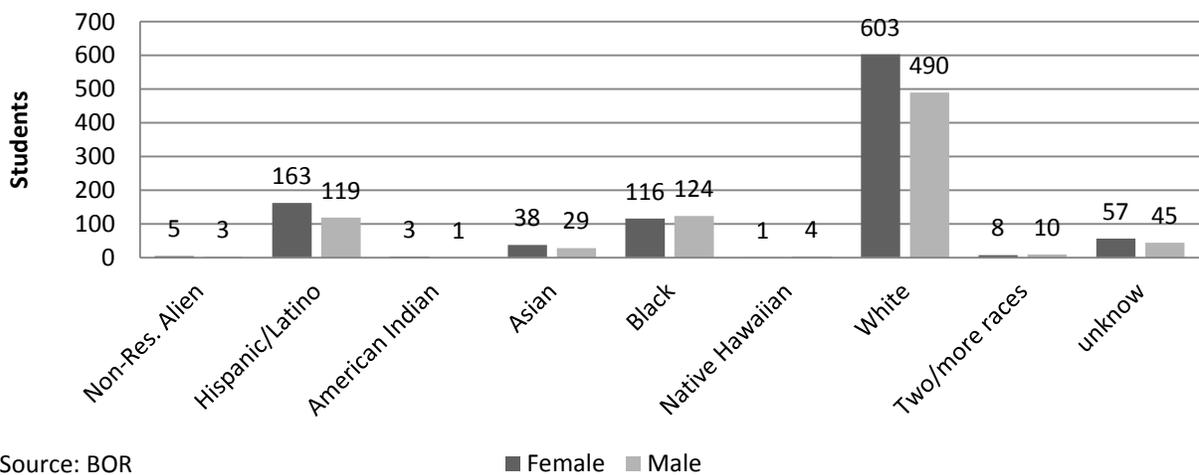
*Age and gender of enrolled students.* Figure III-6 shows the age and gender of the total number of students that were enrolled in for-credit community college certificate programs during AY 2013. The largest age group were 18 to 19 years old (18 percent) followed by students that were ages 40 to 49 years old (14 percent). Females represented 55 percent of total students enrolled, with more females enrolled in every age group except under 19 years old and age 65 and older.

**Figure III-6 . Community College For-Credit Enrolled Students:  
Age and Gender, AY 2013**



**Race/ethnicity and gender.** Figure III-7 shows Whites made up the majority of enrolled students, accounting for 60 percent of the total student population, followed by Hispanic/Latino (16 percent), and African American or Black (13 percent). Of the 202 Hispanic/Latino students enrolled, females accounted for a higher percent than males, 58 percent compared to 42 percent respectively. There were 1,093 White students, with females representing 55 percent of all White students enrolled.

**Figure III-7. Community College For-Credit Enrolled Students:  
Race/Ethnicity and Gender, AY 13**



*Enrollment and awards by community college.* Table III-7 shows that of the 1,819 students enrolled in for-credit certificate programs, Gateway Community College had the greatest number of students, with 307 students seeking a for-credit certificate, followed by Norwalk Community College (274 students) and Manchester Community College (240 students). At the other end of the spectrum, Northwestern Community College had the least number of student enrolled (32 students), followed by Quinebaug Valley (59 students), which one would expect given these colleges rural locations and smaller student bodies.

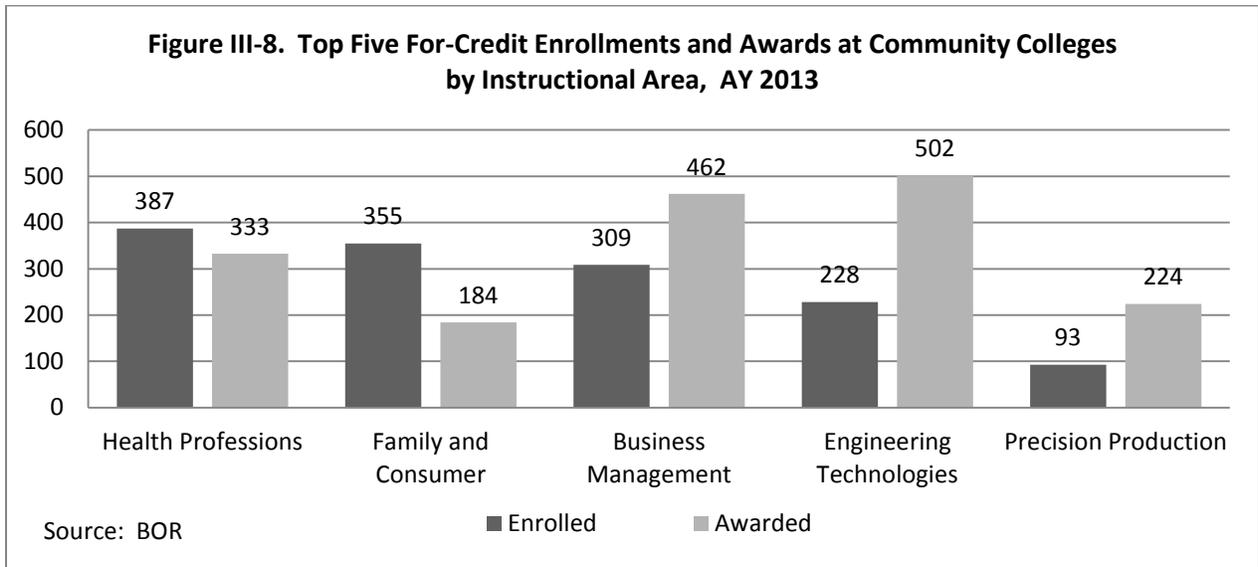
<b>Table III-7. Number of Students Enrolled in For-Credit Certificate Programs by College and Number of Award Granted, AY 2013</b>				
<i>Community College</i>	<i># Students Enrolled</i>	<i>Percent of Total Enrolled</i>	<i># Awards Granted</i>	<i>Percent of Total Awards</i>
Asnuntuck	74	4%	396	20%
Capital	82	5%	61	3%
Gateway	307	17%	177	9%
Housatonic Valley	171	9%	133	7%
Manchester	240	13%	113	6%
Middlesex	67	4%	33	2%
Norwalk	274	15%	149	7%
Naugatuck Valley	215	12%	469	23%
Northwestern	32	2%	44	2%
Quinebaug Valley	59	3%	145	7%
Three Rivers	114	6%	123	6%
Tunxis	184	10%	192	9%
Total	1,819	100%	2,035	101%*
*Total percent adds up to more than 100 due to rounding. Source: BOR				

As shown in the table, during AY 2013, Naugatuck Valley and Asnuntuck Community Colleges granted the greatest percentage of awards at 23 and 20 percent respectively. Asnuntuck Community College had a very high number of awards granted relative to a lower number of students enrolled in community colleges, which may be an indication that the college has higher completion rates than other colleges (even though this data does not track student cohorts). Colleges with the least number of awards granted include Middlesex, Northwestern, and Capital Community Colleges.

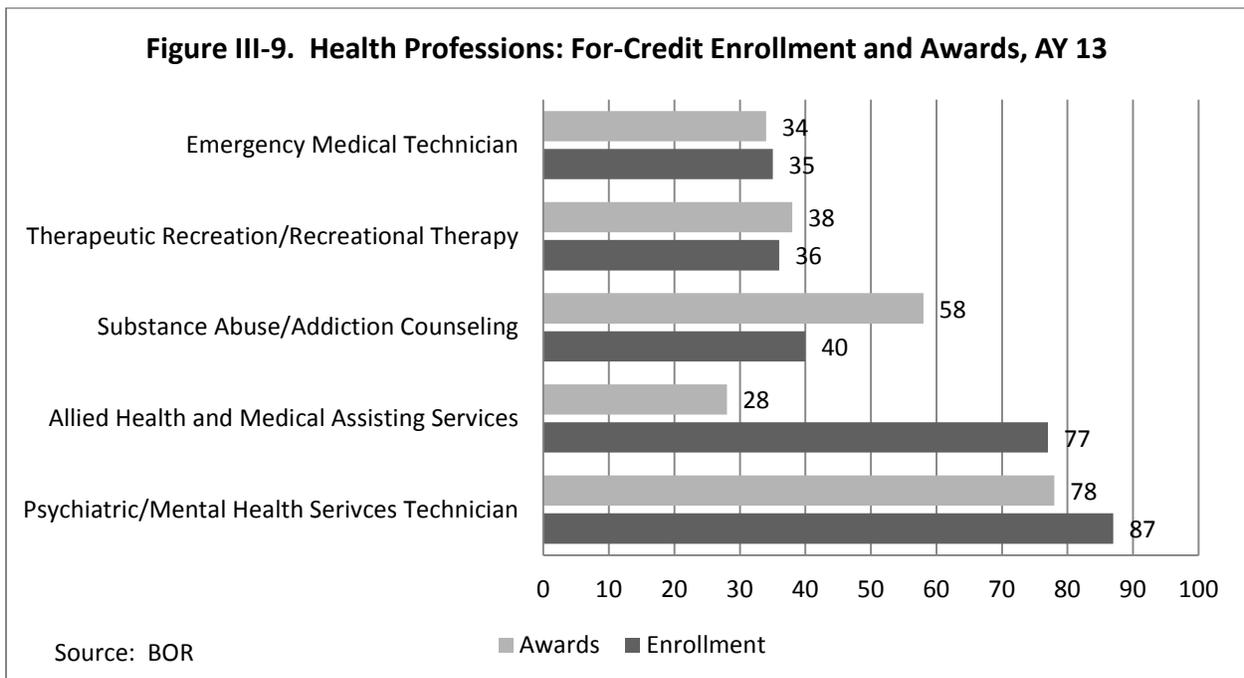
*Top five enrollment and awards in for-credit certificate programs.* Based on the federal government classification system described earlier, PRI staff examined the most common five for-credit certificate programs that students were enrolled in, and awards granted in AY 2013.

In total, there were 1,819 students enrolled and 2,035 awards granted by the community colleges in AY 2013. Figure III-8 shows the top five certificate programs that students were enrolled in and awards were granted. The top five areas shown in the figure accounted for 75

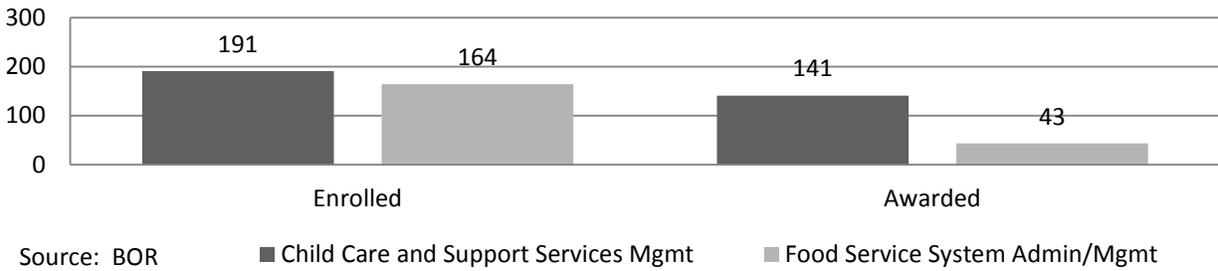
percent of all for-credit certificate enrollments and 84 percent of all awards. In addition, a few of the certificate fields (i.e., Computer Numerically Controlled Machinist Technology, and Family and Consumer) only included one or two certificate programs under those categories.



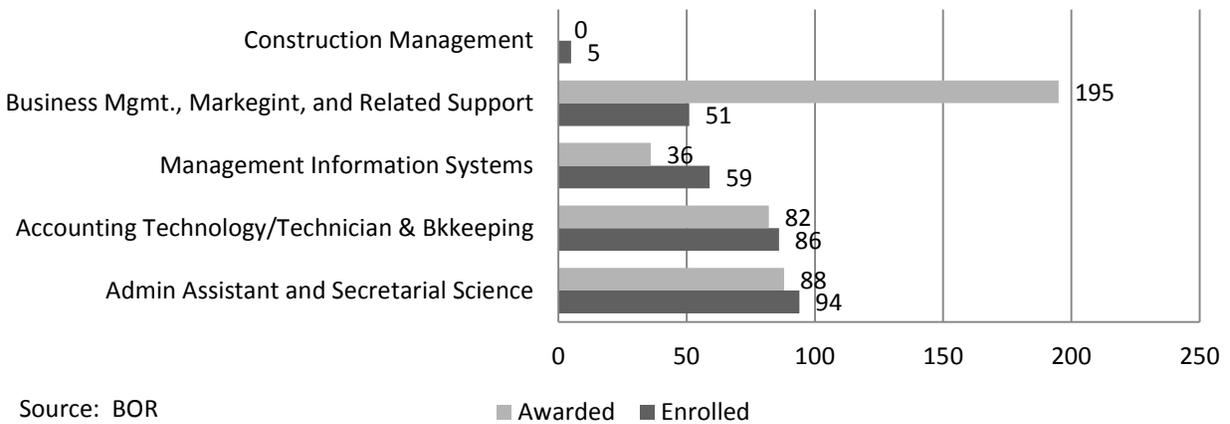
*Top occupational areas.* The next series of figures (Figure III-9 – Figure III-13) show more detail on the most common five areas for enrollments and awards, with the corresponding occupational areas that are part of the federal CIP classification system. Within the most common five, the figures are ordered by the most popular enrollment area (Healthcare Professions) to the fifth most popular (Computer Numerically Machinist Technology).



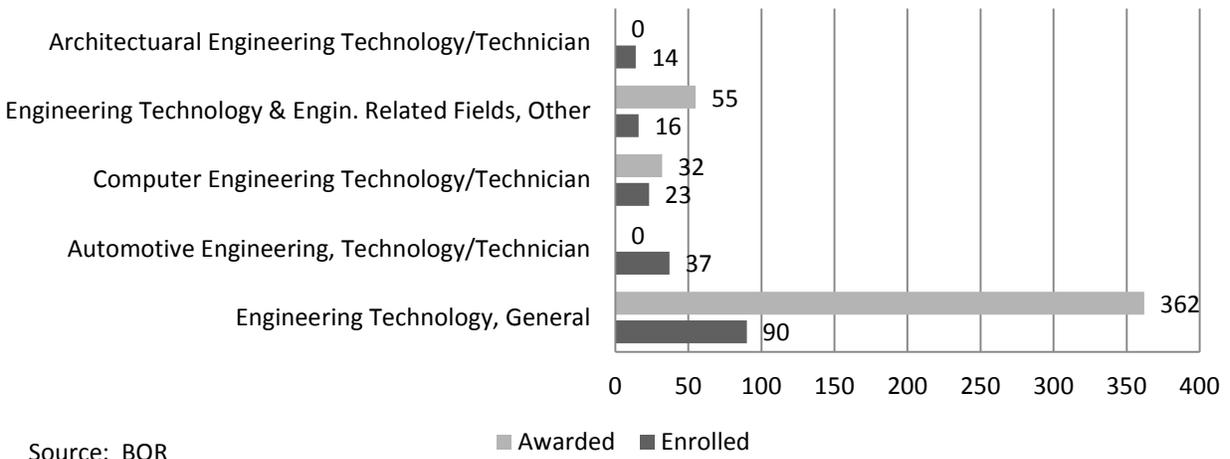
**Figure III-10. Family and Consumer: For-Credit Enrollment and Awards, AY 2013**



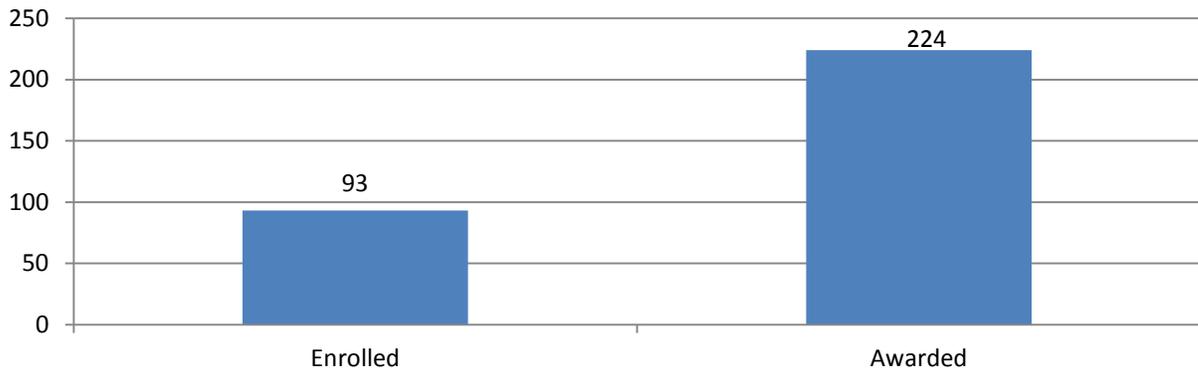
**Figure III-11. Business Management: For-Credit Enrollment and Awards, AY 13**



**Figure III-12. Engineering Technologies: For-Credit Enrollment and Awards, AY 13**



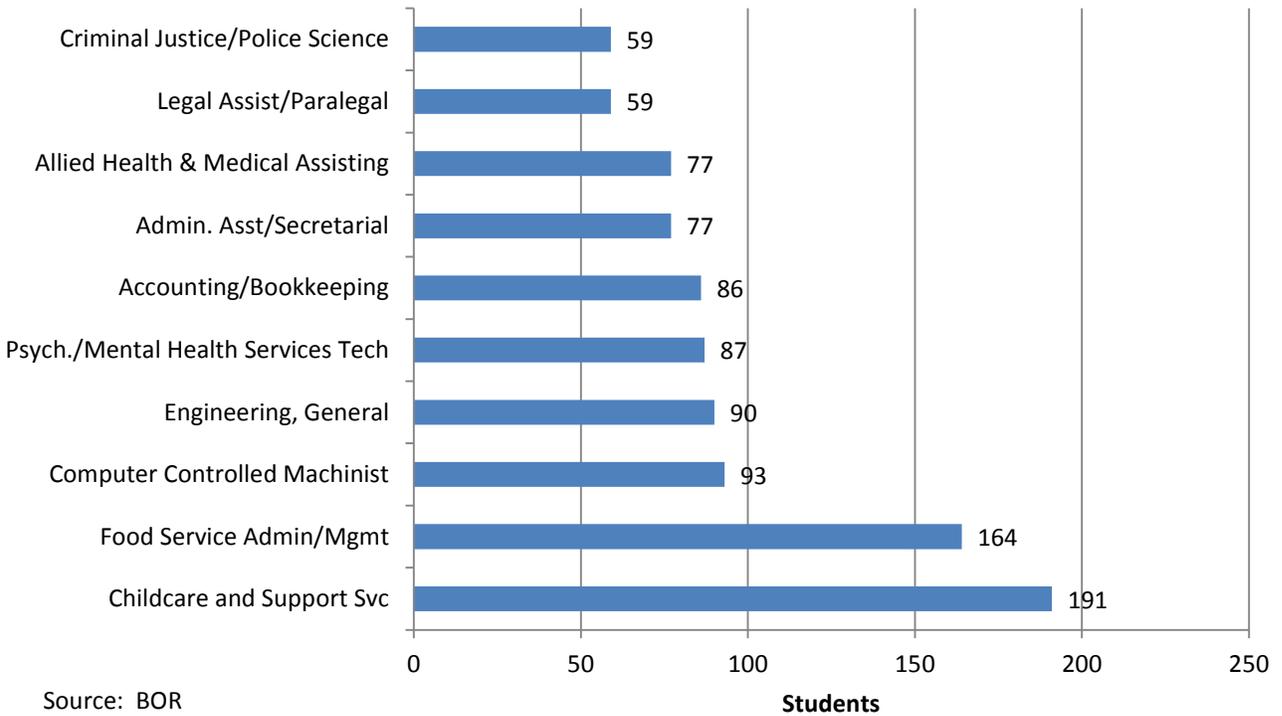
**Figure III-13. Computer Numerically Controlled Machinst Technology: For Credit Enrollment and Awards, AY 2013**



Source: BOR

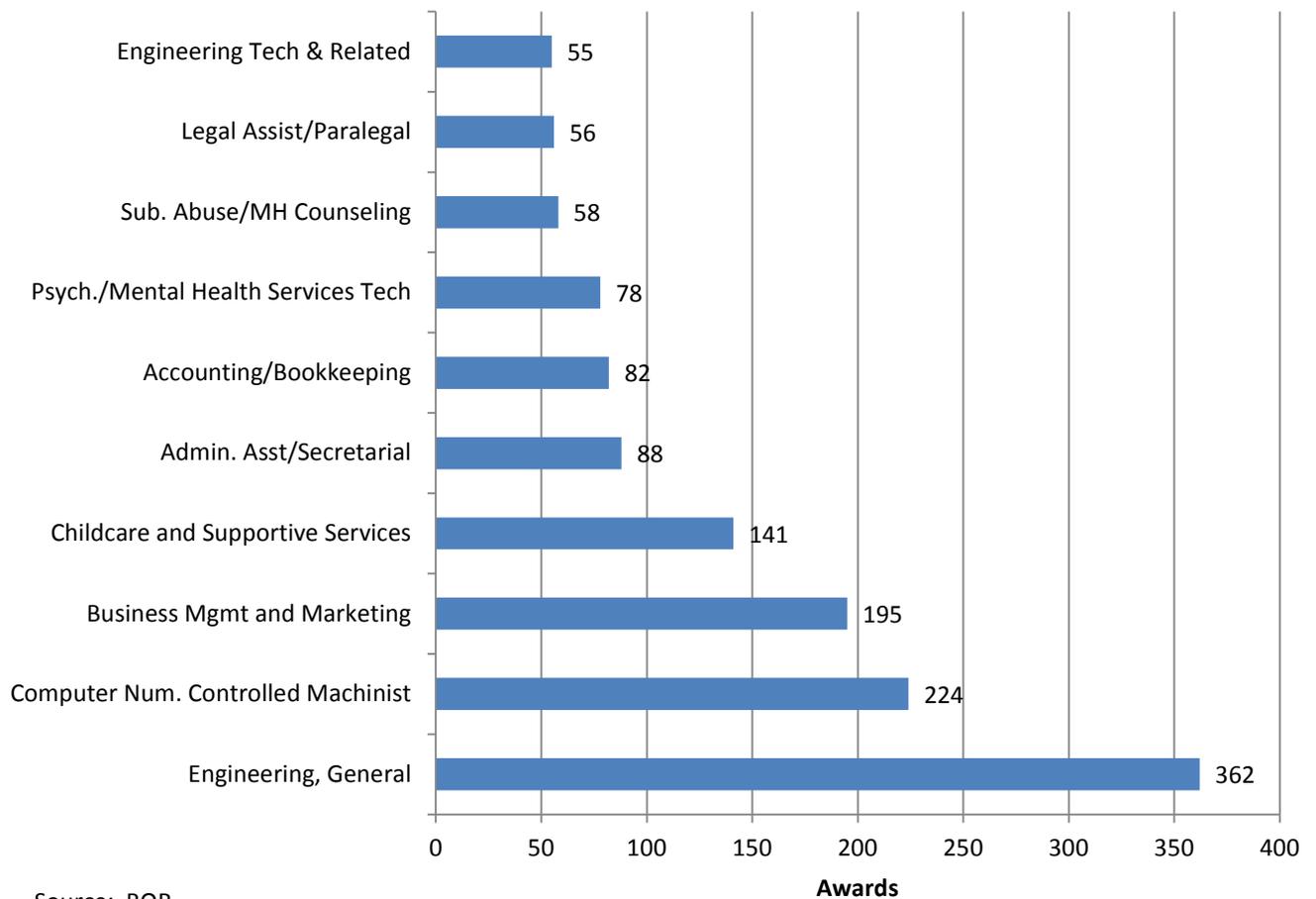
**Most common ten enrollments and awards by occupational area.** Figure III-14 and III-15 show the top ten enrollments and awards for popular occupational areas. Although the most popular enrollment was in Childcare and Support Service occupational areas, the greatest number of awards were for Engineering (general) and machinists.

**Figure III-14. Top 10 For-Credit Community College Certificate Enrollment by Occupational Area, AY 2013**



Source: BOR

**Figure III-15. Top 10 For-Credit Community College Certificate Awards by Occupational Areas, AY 2013**



### Profile of Noncredit Community College Certificate Programs

Identical data that is presented in this chapter regarding for-credit certificate programs offered at the community colleges were not available for noncredit certificate programs. As noted previously, noncredit certificate offerings and students enrolled in, and completing those programs are often kept at the individual community college level and not aggregated or analyzed by the board of regents. For example, the board was unable to provide student demographic information, such as age, gender and race/ethnicity of individuals who enroll in noncredit programs, nor completion or placement rates.

#### **Number of noncredit programs, average length, and average tuition in AY 2013.**

There were 4,240 students enrolled in community college noncredit programs during AY 2013, and 3,208 students received a certificate during the same time period. Altogether, the 12 community colleges offered 141 noncredit certificate programs. Table III-8 shows the number of programs offered by each college, the average course hours required for program completion, and average cost of tuition.

<i>Community College</i>	<i># Programs</i>	<i>Ave. Course Hours</i>	<i>Ave. Tuition</i>
Asnuntuck	12	271*	\$2,706
Capital	6	81	\$1,028
Gateway	10	116	\$1,843
Housatonic Valley	10	67	\$847
Manchester	16	130	\$1,194
Middlesex	9	137	\$1,790
Norwalk	19	78	\$1,095
Naugatuck Valley	20	99	\$1,250
Northwestern	9	113	\$1,458
Quinebaug Valley	7	97	\$834
Three Rivers	11	145	\$1,728
Tunxis	12	123	\$1,318

\*Asnuntuck had the highest average course hours because three of its programs exceed 500 hours to complete: Medical Billing (522 hours); Medical Assisting (720 hours); and Massage Therapy (824 hours).  
Source: BOR

As the table shows, Capital Community College had the least number of noncredit certificate programs, while Naugatuck Valley Community College had the most (closely followed by Norwalk Community College). Norwalk Community College also offered programs with the least average number of credit hours required for completion. The least expensive programs, based on average tuition, were Quinebaug Valley and Housatonic Valley Community Colleges, while the most expensive were Asnuntuck and Gateway Community Colleges.

**Student enrollment in noncredit certificate programs.** Table III-9 shows the number and percent of total students enrolled in noncredit certificate programs by college. Capital Community College had the least number of students with just about 2 percent of all students enrolled in noncredit programs. (Capital also offered the smallest number of programs.) Naugatuck Valley, Norwalk and Tunxis Community Colleges had the greatest number of students seeking noncredit certificates respectively.

<i>Community College</i>	<i># Enrolled</i>	<i>% of Total Enrolled</i>
Asnuntuck	181	4.3%
Capital	75	1.8%
Gateway	149	3.5%
Housatonic Valley	191	4.5%
Manchester	400	9.4%
Middlesex	234	5.5%
Norwalk	849	20.0%
Naugatuck Valley	911	21.5%
Northwestern	146	3.4%
Quinebaug Valley	254	6.0%
Three Rivers	347	8.1%
Tunxis	503	11.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,240</b>	<b>100%</b>

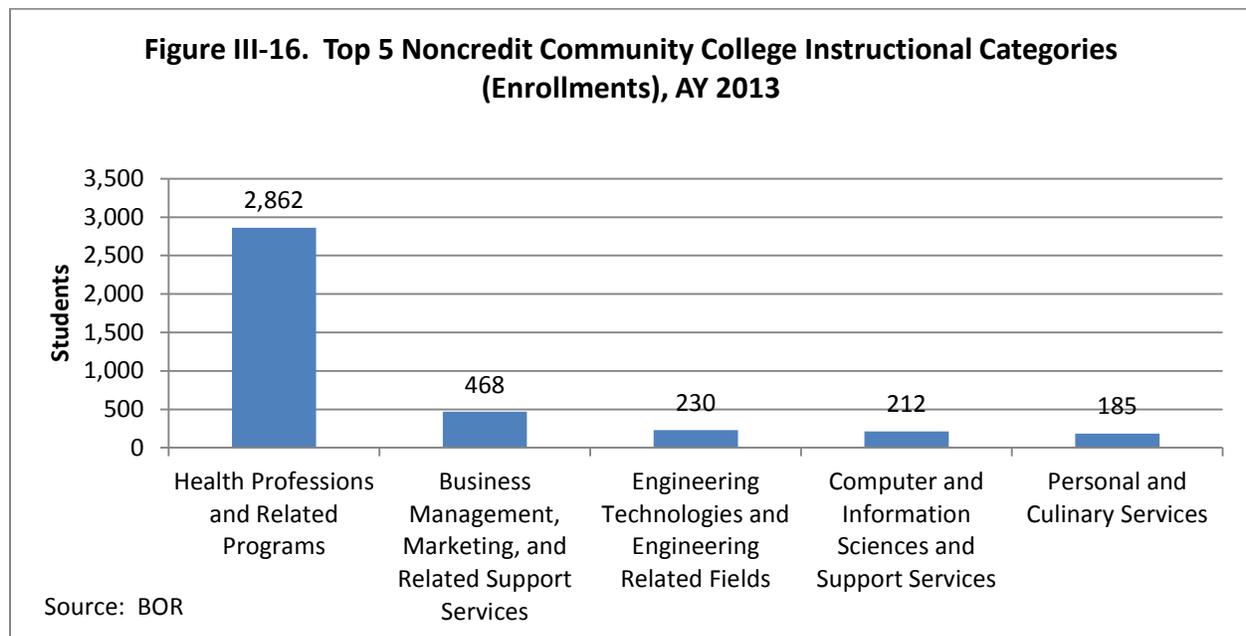
Source: BOR

**Certificate program length and tuition.** Noncredit certificates offered by the community colleges measure program length by course hours, which range in length from 4 hours to 824 hours. PRI staff converted course hours into standard credit hours for approximate comparison purposes to for-credit programs. Table III-10 shows the equivalent credit length, the number of programs falling within that length, and tuition ranges.

<i>Equivalent Credit Length</i>	<i># of Certificate Programs*</i>	<i>% of Total</i>	<i>Tuition Range</i>	<i>Average Tuition</i>	<i>Average Cost per Equivalent Credit Hour</i>
Less than 15 credits	29	21	\$71-\$5,099	\$638	\$407
15 to 29 credits	41	29	\$400 - \$4,000	\$936	\$219
30 or more credits	70	49	\$527 - \$6,990	\$2,062	\$157

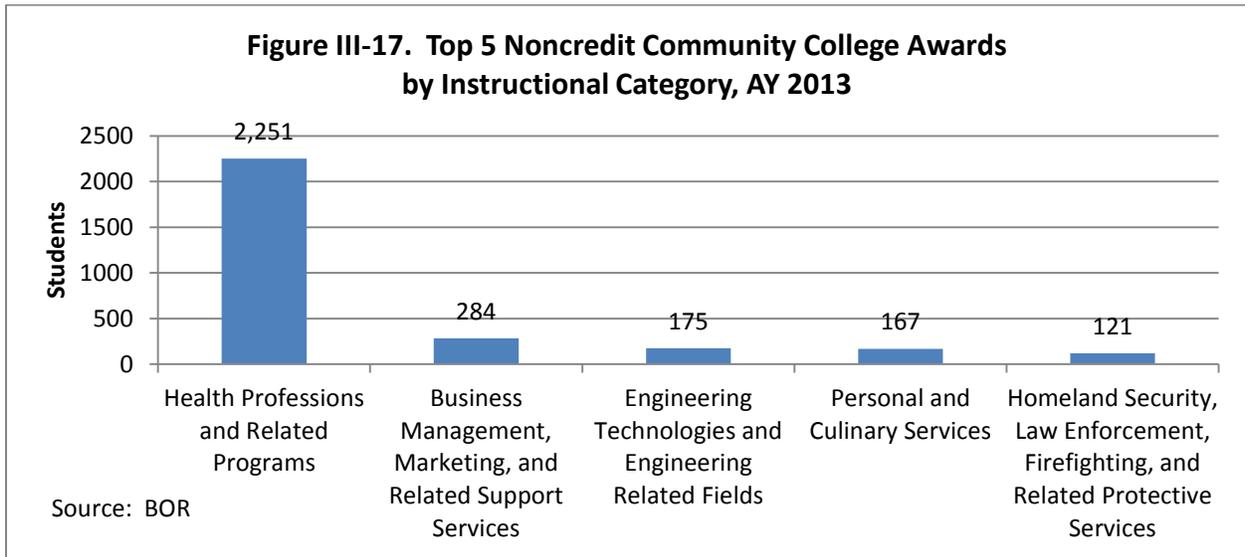
Source: PRI staff analysis of BOR data. (Note: Contact hours for noncredit community college programs were converted to equivalent credits for purposes of comparison. One credit is equivalent to 15 contact hours)

**Five most common enrollment categories in noncredit certificate programs.** Figure III-16 shows the top five instructional categories for noncredit certificate program enrollment, based on the federal CIP classification system. The five top categories accounted for 3,957 students or 93 percent of all students seeking a noncredit certificate at a community college that year. By far the most popular instructional category in noncredit programs is those related to health careers, representing 68 percent of total enrollment in noncredit programs.

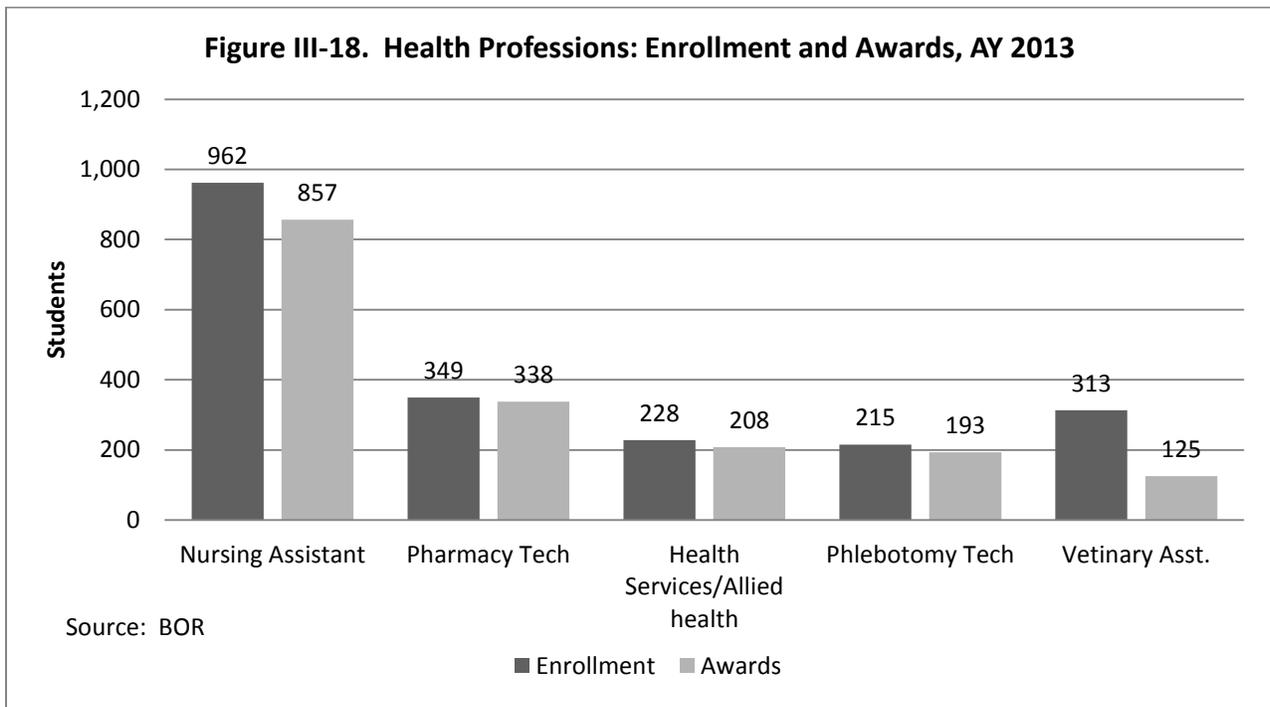


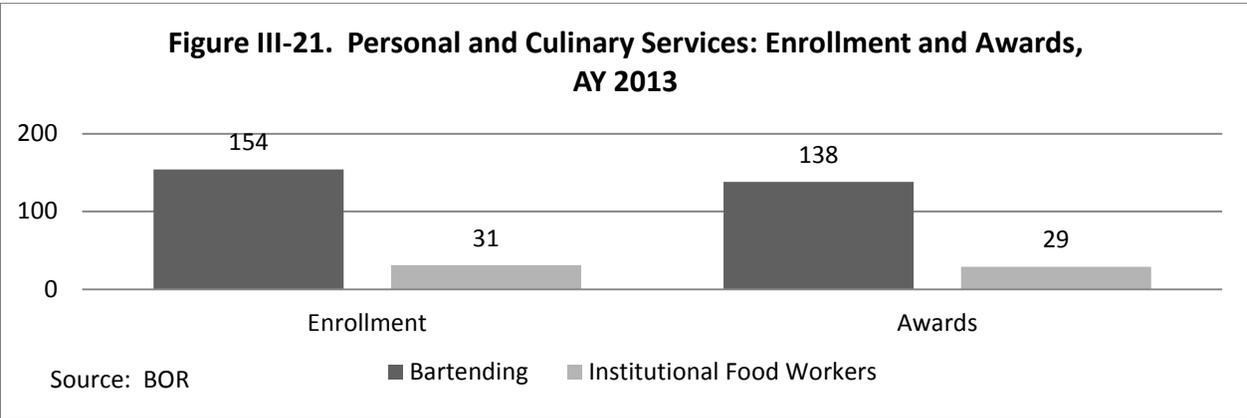
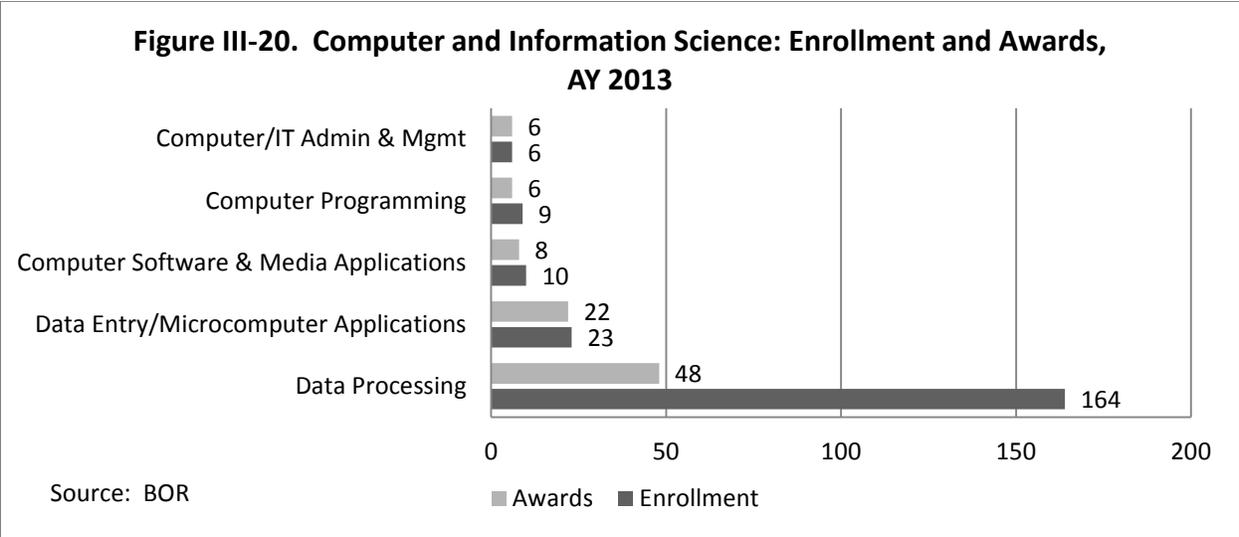
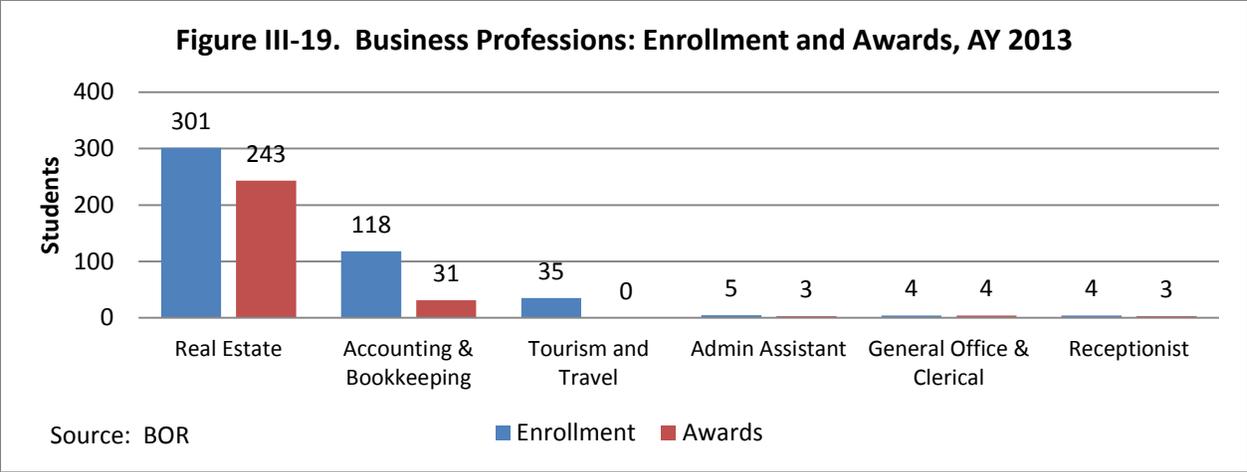
**Noncredit certificate awards.** PRI staff also examined the number of awards granted during AY 2013 (Figure III-17). Altogether there were 3,208 certificates awarded. The top three awards – health, business, and engineering – mirror the enrollment trend for that year. Homeland Security, Law Enforcement, Firefighting and Related Protective Services, however,

were one of the top noncredit certificates awarded that year, but did not fall within the top five for enrollment.



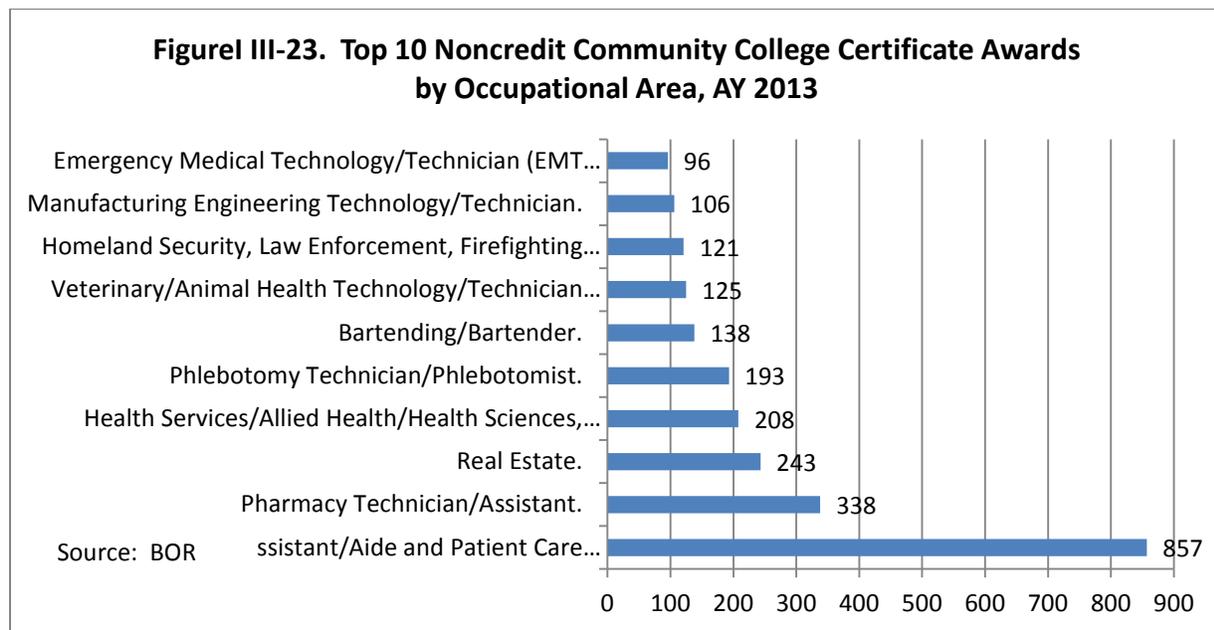
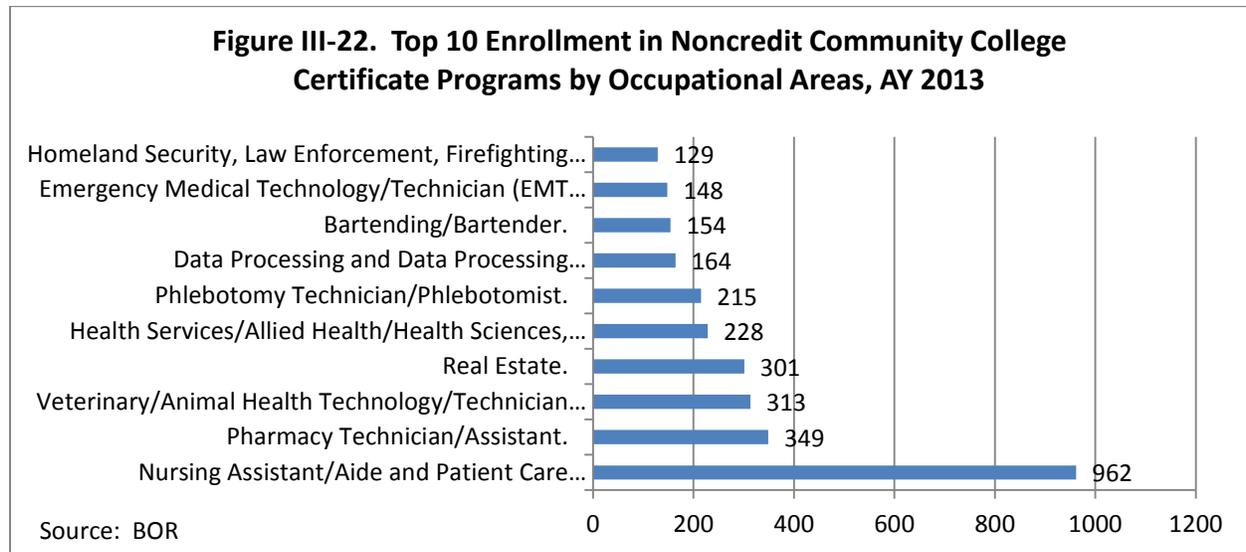
The next series of figures (Figure III-18 – Figure III-21) shows more detail on the top five enrollment and awards, with the specific names of the certificate programs and the corresponding occupation for which the student was pursuing a career. Within the top five, the figures are ordered by the most popular certificate field (Healthcare Professions) to the fifth most popular (Personal and Culinary Services).





**Ten most common enrollments and awards by occupational area.** Figure III-22 and III-23 show the top ten enrollments and awards in noncredit certificate programs by occupational areas. The most popular occupational areas, in terms of enrollments and awards, were Patient Care Technicians and Nursing Assistants (CNAs). Similar to enrollments, the majority of the top ten awards were granted in health care occupations, with awards for the Nursing Assistant/Aide

and Patient Care Technician certificates almost three times more than those for Pharmacy Technician/Assistant. Awards for the noncredit manufacturing engineering technology/technician certificate ranked ninth but were not among the top ten in terms of enrollment.



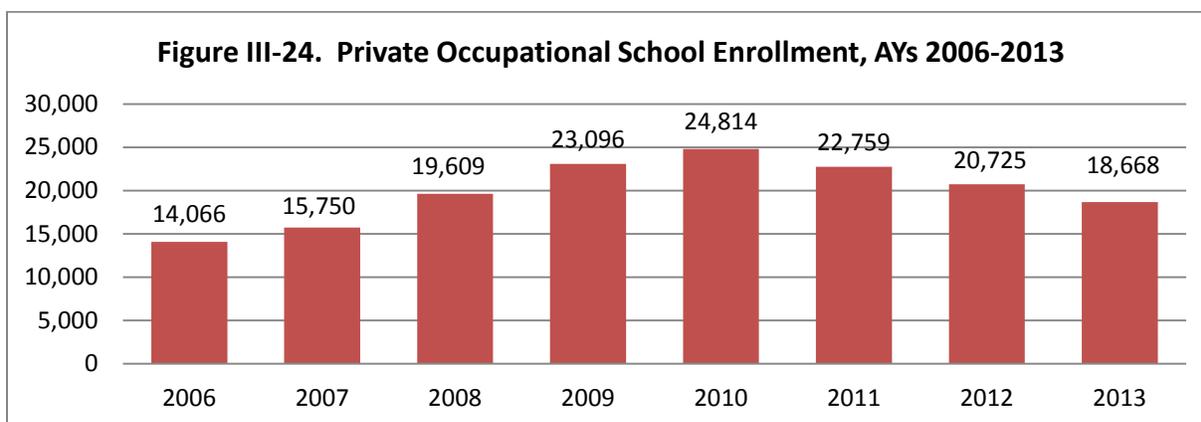
### Profile of Private Occupational Schools

Program review staff analyzed private occupational school data compiled by the Office of Higher Education. These schools offer only noncredit certificate programs. Student enrollment, completion, and placement data were collected through an annual survey administered by OHE and certain student demographic and financial aid data were also collected by OHE using a survey instrument developed by PRI. There were a total of 46 out of 57 schools (80 percent) that provided data for AY 2013.

It should be noted that not all schools provided data for each question, the data are self-reported to OHE, and the data have not been audited. While there is some enrollment trend data from academic year 2006 through 2013, most of the data analysis focuses on the most recent year of data, AY 2013. As shown in detail below, the data for the private occupational schools indicate:

- there were a total of 18,668 students enrolled in 308 private occupational school certificate programs and 13,651 of those students graduated in AY 2013. The overall completion rate was 73 percent;<sup>24</sup>
- most of the students enrolled in AY 2013 were women and under the age of 30;
- most of the certificate programs are less than 15 equivalent credits or about less than one college semester in length;
- the average tuition cost *per equivalent credit* ranged from \$337 to \$447;
- Health Professions, Mechanics, Personal and Culinary Services, Transportation, and Construction Trades were the five most common instructional categories and represented about 90 percent of total certificate enrollments and awards in AY 2013; and
- Health Professions had the lowest overall placement and placement-in-field rate, while Transportation had the highest rates for both measures.

**Enrollment.** Figure III-24 shows the trend in total private occupational school enrollment between academic years 2006 and 2013. Since 2006 enrollment dramatically rose, peaking in 2010 at about 25,000 students (an increase of 76 percent), and had declined in 2013 to 18,700 students (a 25 percent decrease compared to 2010). The average number of enrolled over the last 5 years was about 22,000 students.



**Enrollment changes by instructional category.** Table III-11 compares student enrollments by 16 instructional categories for Ays 2006 and 2013. As shown earlier, between 2006 and 2013, there was a 33 percent increase in the number of enrollments (though a decline from 2010). The areas with the largest increases in enrollment were Computer Information

<sup>24</sup> Continuing students were removed from the analysis and the placement rate calculation.

Sciences (274 percent), Precision Production (190 percent), and Construction Trades (83 percent), although each of these areas accounted for less than 5 percent of total enrollments.

	<i>2006</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>Percent of 2013 Total</i>	<i>Percent Change</i>
Computer Info Sciences	93	348	2%	274%
Precision Production	62	180	1%	190%
Construction Trades	431	787	4%	83%
Mechanical and Repair Tech	1,582	2,768	15%	75%
Health Professions	6,387	9,220	49%	44%
Transportation	1,438	2,010	11%	40%
Personal and Culinary Services	1,771	2,100	11%	19%
Engineering-Related Fields	151	157	1%	4%
Engineering	0	9	0%	0%
Legal Professions	202	157	1%	-22%
Business, Mgmt, and Mrkt	1,177	756	4%	-36%
Visual And Performing Arts.	40	16	0%	-60%
Agriculture and Related	88	32	0%	-64%
Communications/ Journalism	350	112	1%	-68%
Leisure and Rec Activities	104	16	0%	-85%
Basic Skills	190	0	0%	-100%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,066</b>	<b>18,668</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>33%</b>
Source: OHE				

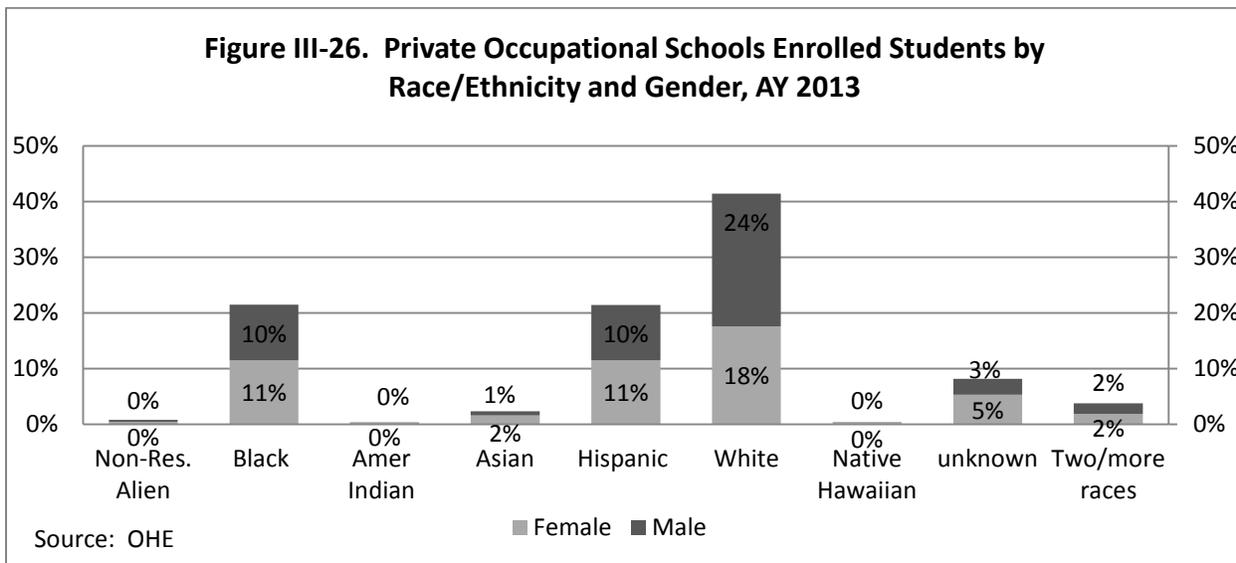
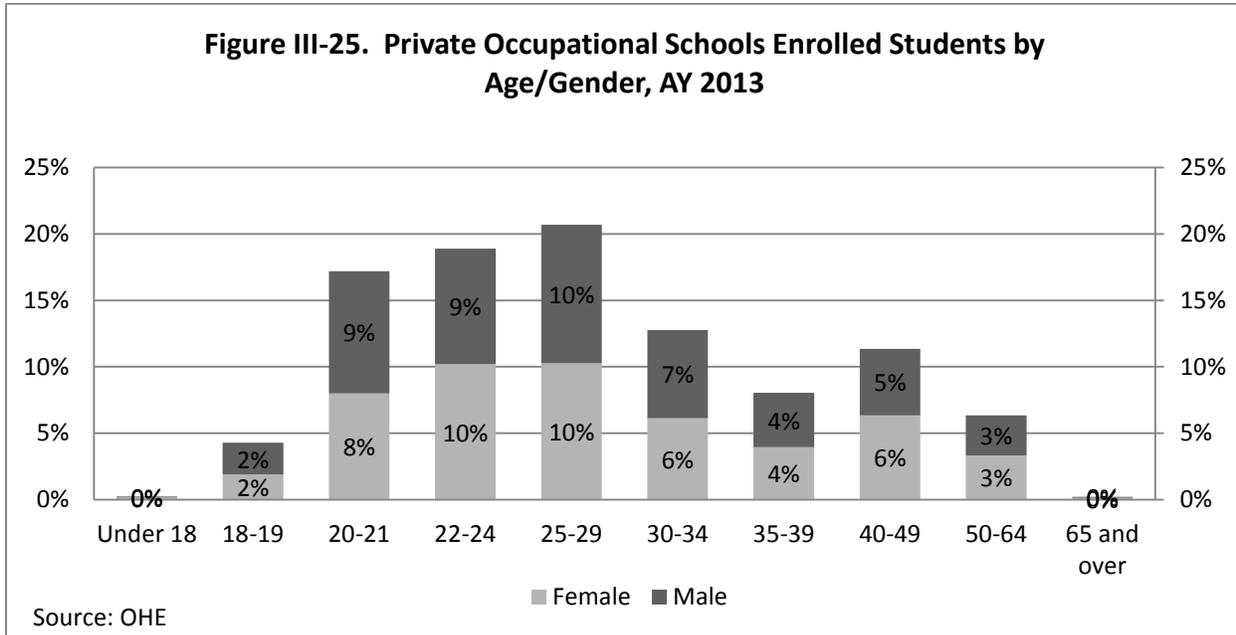
Health Professions had the largest numerical increase with over 2,800 additional enrollments. The areas experienced the greatest decline were Basic Skills (-100 percent), Leisure and Recreational Activities (-85 percent), and Communications/ Journalism (-68 percent). Similarly, these areas comprised a small percentage of total enrollments. The area with the biggest numerical loss was Business, Management, and Marketing (-421). Information on awards was not collected by OHE in 2006.

**Gender, age and race.** Figures III-25 and III-26 shows the gender, age, and racial/ethnic breakdown of those enrolled in private occupational schools in AY 2013. Several schools did not record or report demographic information: about 44 percent of the students are missing from the age and gender analysis; and almost half are missing from the race/ethnicity analysis.

- about 52 percent those enrolled were female;<sup>25</sup>
- about one-fifth were under the age of 21, while 61 percent were under the age of 30;
- 42 percent of the students were White, 21 percent Hispanic, and 21 percent Black/African American;

<sup>25</sup> Includes those students whose age was unknown and not shown in the figure.

- White males (24 percent) were the single largest demographic group; and
- about 14 percent of enrolled students were estimated to already hold an associate’s degree or higher.



**Certificate program length.** Private occupational schools measure program length in a number of different ways, including clock hours, credit hours, quarter credit hours, lessons, and weeks. Program review staff obtained information on all 722 certificate programs that can be offered by the private occupational schools and are approved by OHE. The various program formats were converted into standard credit hours for approximate comparison purposes. It should be noted that only a portion of the 722 programs are offered at any given time. (In AY 2013, for example, 308 certificate programs were offered). As Table III-12 shows, most of the

private occupational school certificate offerings (65 percent) are less than the equivalent of 15 credits (i.e., or one full college semester) followed by programs over 30 credits (30 percent).

**Table III-12. Number of Certificate Programs by Equivalent Credit Length and Tuition**

<i>Equivalent Credit Length</i>	<i>Number of Certificate Programs</i>	<i>Percent of Total</i>	<i>Tuition Range</i>	<i>Average Tuition</i>	<i>Average Cost per Equivalent Credit*</i>
Less than 15 Credits	473	65%	\$50 - \$12,840	\$1,443	\$447
15 to 29 Credits	38	5%	\$950 - \$17,640	\$8,120	\$337
More Than 30 Credits	217	30%	\$3,600 - \$37,105	\$20,600	\$410

Source: OHE

\*Contact hours for private occupational school programs were converted to equivalent credits for purposes of comparison. One credit is equivalent to 15 contact hours.

**Tuition costs.** The tuition costs are highly variable within the equivalent credit length categories, as shown in the table. For example, the tuition range for those certificate programs that were less than 15 equivalent credits went from \$50 to over \$12,000. The lower cost programs were for construction safety programs and the clock hours converted to less than one equivalent credit. The higher cost program was for a radio and TV broadcasting certificate and the clock hours converted to about seven equivalent credits. The average cost per equivalent credit across the categories was much closer – between \$337 and \$447.

**Private occupational schools with high enrollments.** Table III-13 presents the five private occupational schools with the highest enrollments for AY 2013. They represent 56 percent of total private occupational school enrollments and 48 percent of all the certificates offered. Students who attend these schools are eligible to receive federal student financial aid (Title IV).

**Table III-13. Five Private Occupational Schools with Highest Enrollment, AY 2013**

	<i>Number of Enrollees</i>	<i>Percent of Total Enrollees</i>	<i>Number of Certificate Programs Offered</i>	<i>Percent of Total Certificates</i>
Porter & Chester Institute	3,746	20%	84	27%
Lincoln Technical Institute	2,385	13%	28	9%
Branford Hall Career Institute	1,492	8%	18	6%
New England Tractor Trailer Training School	1,409	8%	8	3%
Stone Academy	1,368	7%	10	3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,400</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>48%</b>

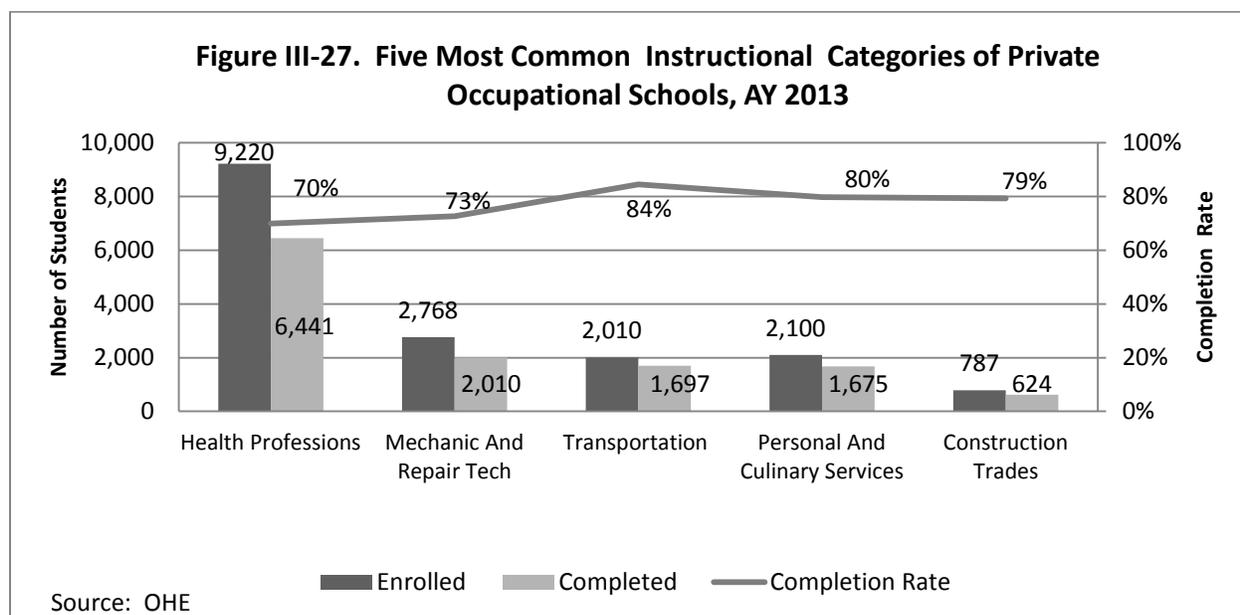
Source: OHE

Most private occupational schools, however, are much smaller than the top five schools listed in the table. As shown in Table III-14, the schools that enroll less than 100 students each represented about half of all the private occupational schools operating in Connecticut and enrolled less than 5 percent of total students.

Total Student Enrollment	Percent of Total Schools	Percent of Total Students
Over 1,000	13%	62%
500 - 1,000	9%	14%
100 - 499	30%	20%
Less Than 100	48%	4%

Source: OHE

**Five most common enrollment and award categories.** As noted above, the federal government developed a classification system that allows for the grouping of similar degree and certificate programs across the country despite variations in name and content. Program review staff analyzed the private occupational schools programs according to this classification scheme.



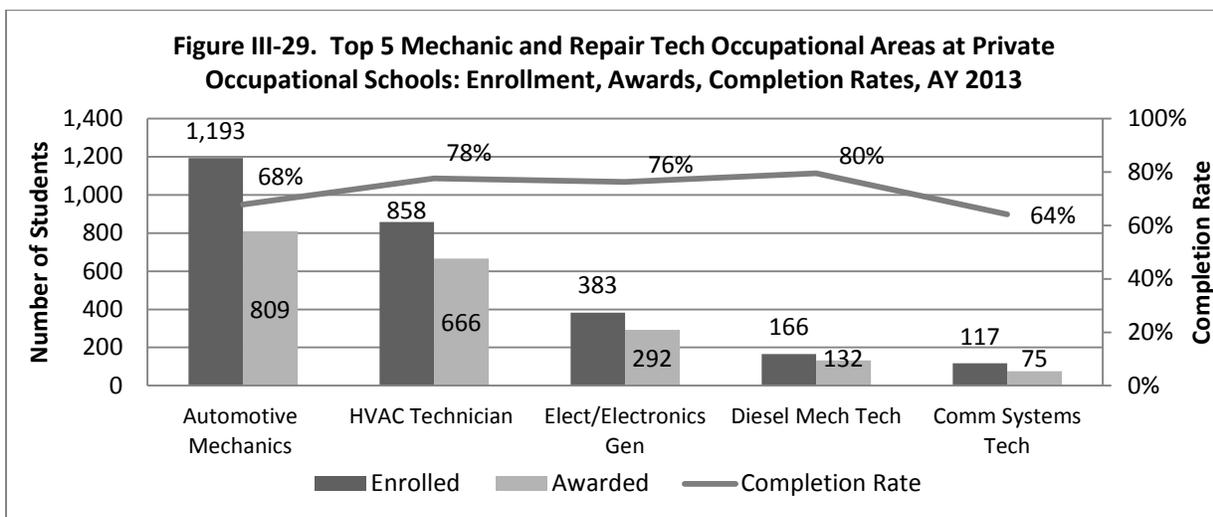
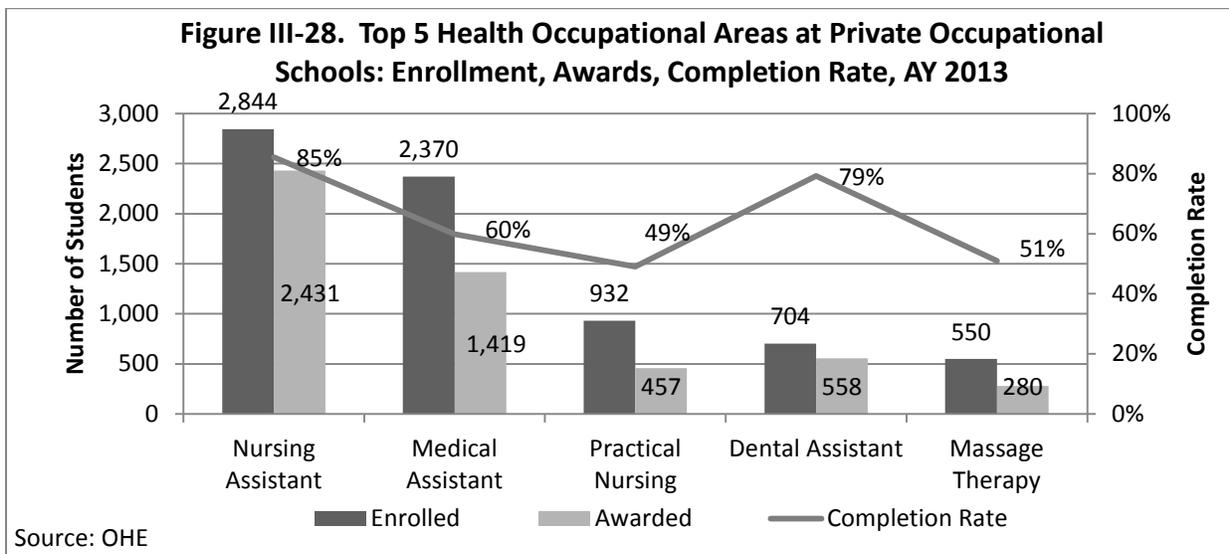
In total, there were a total of 18,668 students enrolled in private occupational school certificate programs and 13,651 of those students graduated in AY 2013. The overall completion rate was 73 percent for the 46 schools that reported this data. Figure III-27, illustrates the student certificate enrollment and awards by the top five instructional categories for AY 2013. In addition, the graduation rate is also displayed. It can be noted that:

- the five most common instructional categories represent about 90 percent of total certificate enrollments and awards;
- the top category, health professions, accounted for about one-half for all enrollments and awards; and

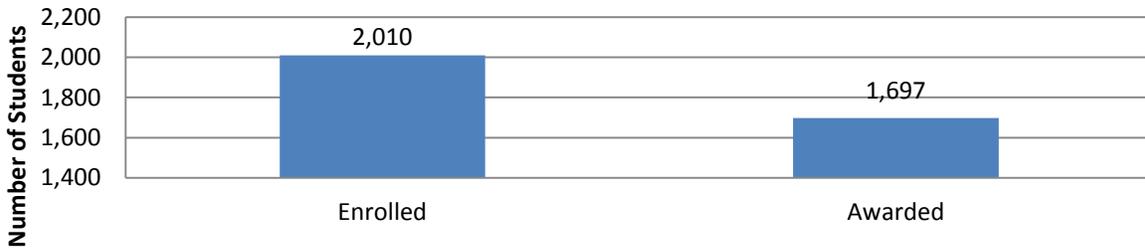
- the graduation rate was fairly high within these categories and ranged from 70 percent to 80 percent.

**Most common occupational areas.** The next five figures (Figures III-28 to III-32) show AY 2013 student enrollments, awards, and completion rates for the most common occupational areas that are associated with the general five instructional categories above. The most popular, by far, was Health Professions.

In these figures, student enrollments and awards are for the same student cohort, which allows for a calculation of the completion rate. Of the 20 occupational areas that are depicted below, Practical Nursing (49 percent) and Massage Therapy (51 percent) show the lowest completion rate, while Aesthetician, Building Inspector, and Other Construction Trades have the highest at 100 percent.

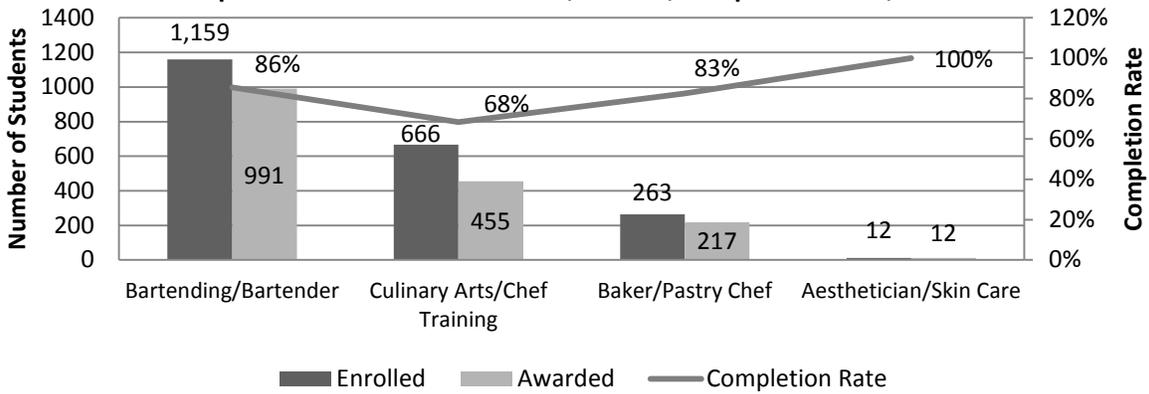


**Figure III-30. Top Transportation Occupational Area at Private Occupational Schools - Truck and Bus Driver: Enrollment, Awards, and Completion Rate, AY 2013**



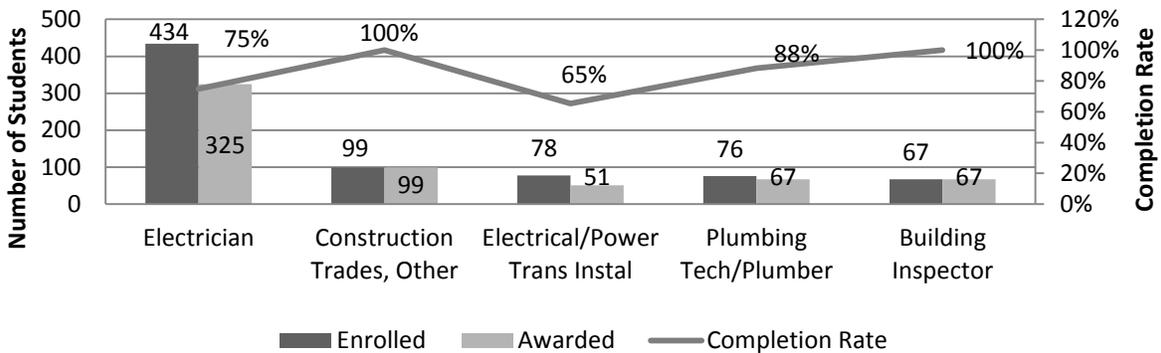
Note: Completion rate was 84 percent  
Source: OHE

**Figure III-31. Top Personal and Culinary Services Occupational Areas at Private Occupational Schools: Enrollments, Awards, Completion Rates, AY 2013**



Source: OHE

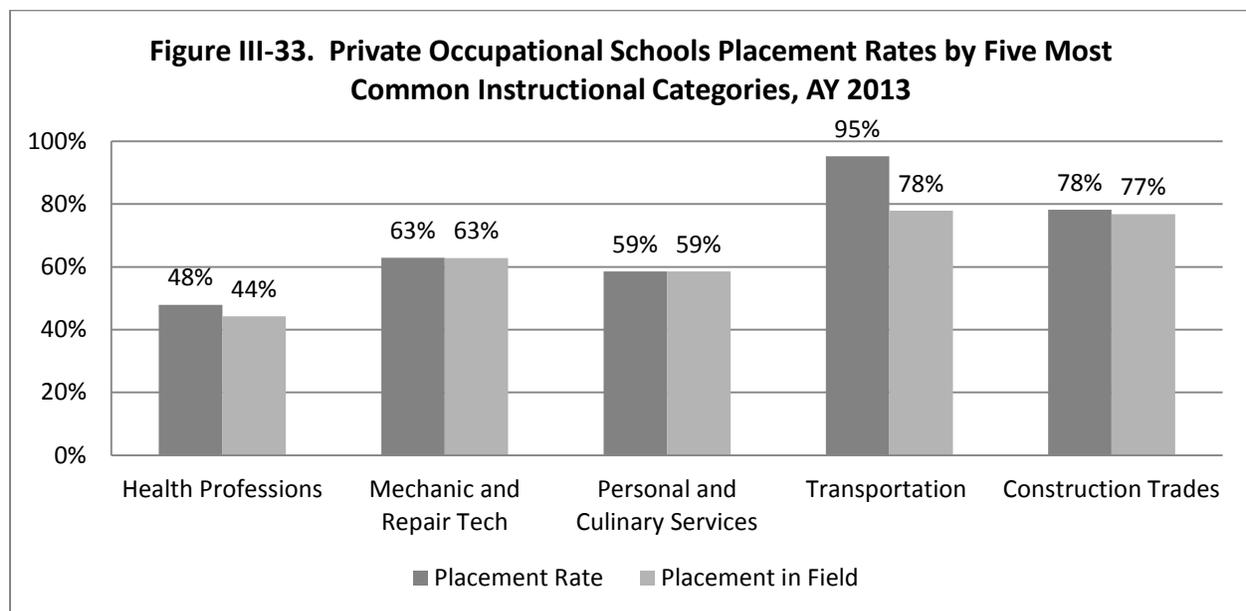
**Figure III-32. Top 5 Construction Occupational Areas at Private Occupational Schools: Enrollment, Awards, Completion Rates, AY 2013**



Source: OHE

**Five most common instructional categories placement information.** The Office of Higher Education also asks the private occupational schools to provide information about student placement. The office requests the number of students that have been placed overall and those who found “placement-in-field.” These numbers should be interpreted with caution as OHE did not provide a specific definition to the schools on how to calculate placement-in-field. In addition, as noted earlier, these statistics are not audited by OHE. Only 33 of the 46 schools that reported to OHE provided placement information. It may be difficult for schools to track this information after a student graduates from a program. As a result, placement rates may not truly reflect employment status and may be underrepresenting actual placement or overrepresenting because of definitional problems.

Figure III-33 shows that the category of Health Professions had the lowest overall placement rate and placement-in-field, while Transportation had the highest rates for both measures.



**Ten most common occupational areas graduation ranges and placement rates.** For the next part of the analysis, PRI staff focused on the certificate programs in the ten most common occupational areas and examined a cohort of student enrollments and awards. These occupational areas represent 72 percent of the 18,668 students enrolled and 73 percent of the 13,651 certificates awarded. This is a subset of the 20 areas presented above.

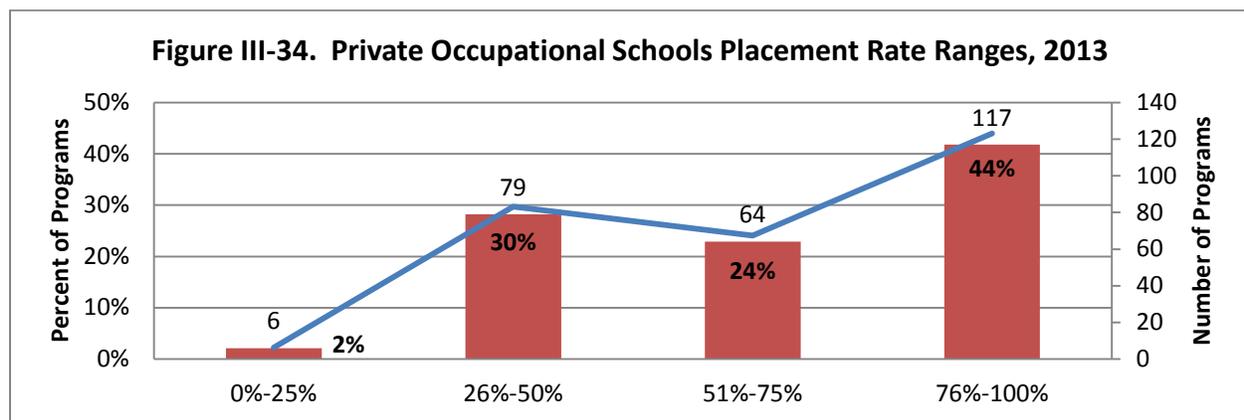
Table III-15 presents graduation and placement rate information for certificate programs in these areas and is ordered by popularity (enrollments) for AY 2013. The overall graduation rate of the certificate programs within these 10 occupational areas is 74 percent but the range of graduation rates vary considerably. Some programs had no graduates and some graduated 100 percent of students. A majority of the certificate programs in each area have a graduation rate above 50 percent.

<i>Occupational Area</i>	<i>Percent of Total Students Enrolled in POSs</i>	<i>Percent of Total Awards in POSs</i>	<i>Graduation Rate Range</i>	<i>Percent of Programs Above 50% Graduation Rate</i>	<i>Placement Rate</i>	<i>Placement In Field</i>
Nursing Assistant/Aide	15%	18%	0% - 100%	83%	81%	71%
Medical/Clinical Assistant	13%	10%	25%-92%	79%	57%	56%
Truck and Bus Driver	11%	12%	76%-100%	100%	95%	78%
Automobile/Automotive Technology	6%	6%	52%-84%	100%	54%	54%
Bartending/Bartender	6%	7%	70%-100%	100%	53%	53%
Practical Nursing, Vocational Nursing	5%	3%	20%-81%	64%	61%	61%
Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation and Refrig.	5%	5%	33%-100%	89%	72%	72%
Dental Assisting/Assistant	4%	4%	0%-100%	90%	62%	61%
Fashion Modeling	4%	3%	45%-80%	80%	54%	54%
Culinary Arts/Chef Training	4%	3%	31%-86%	75%	54%	54%

Source: OHE

The overall placement rate ranges from 53 percent (Bartenders) to 95 percent (Truck and Bus Drivers). The low and high rates for placement-in-field were for the same occupations: low, 53 percent (Bartenders); and high, 78 percent (Truck and Bus Drivers). Six of the 10 occupational areas had the same percentage for placement rate and placement-in-field rate, suggesting that schools with those offerings may only be aware of students who are placed in the field.

**Placement rate of POSs.** Figure III-34 shows the range of placement rates for 266 certificate programs of the 308 that were offered at private occupational schools in AY 2013. On the low end of the spectrum, there were six certificate programs that reported a placement rate between zero and 25 percent, and at the other end there were 117 programs that reported a rate between 76 and 100 percent.



### **PRI Findings and Recommendations**

This chapter contains PRI committee findings and 11 recommendations. The recommendations aim to help potential and current students of Connecticut certificate programs be equipped with better information to select the program that best serves their needs. Currently, there is no single source of information students can access that allows them to compare certificate program costs, hours for program completion, and graduation and placement rates among similar programs.

Furthermore, the committee found that accessing basic program information on individual college and school websites is extremely difficult, particularly in locating the cost of tuition for noncredit community college and private occupational school certificate programs. Since the committee discovered that these critical factors vary widely, among programs within the community college and private occupational school programs, it is imperative for students to be able to easily evaluate the similarities and differences among programs.

### **Transparency and Accountability Needs to Be Increased for All Certificate Programs**

*The committee found a lack of consumer information that could allow potential and current students to compare certificate program costs and outcomes across schools and colleges, as well as among similar certificate programs.* Since there is wide variation in tuition costs, there needs to be more transparency so that potential students can easily access this information. For example, PRI staff could not find tuition and fees listed at all on several websites (both public colleges and private occupational schools). Many other times, the information was so embedded in the website it was difficult to locate. Regarding outcomes, the board of regents does not track student cohorts to determine graduation and job placement rates, so that students cannot even determine whether private occupational schools or community college programs have better outcomes.

As noted in Chapter II, the federal government recently adopted regulations to provide more transparency for students about schools offering certificate programs that were eligible for federal Title IV funding and lead to “gainful employment in a recognized occupation.” A final rule was issued in October 2014 that requires graduates of gainful employment programs meet minimum standards for student debt to earnings ratios. Failure to meet the ratios puts a school or college at risk of losing its Title IV eligible (the rule only applies to schools and colleges eligible to receive these funds.) It also requires public disclosures regarding performance and outcomes of their gainful employment programs including information on costs, earnings, debt, and completion rates. No disclosures are required however, for the non-credit certificate programs at community colleges and those private occupational schools that do not receive Title IV funds. As noted previously, the regulations are currently being challenged in federal court.

The reason the federal government adopted regulations governing what must be disclosed to students and penalizing those schools with poor performance is a belief that a number of students were receiving financial aid for gainful employment programs that:

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- were not adequately training students in skills to obtain and maintain jobs;
- were providing training for low wage occupations that do not justify program costs;
- had high student withdrawal rates which were leading to high loan default rates; and
- left students with high loan debt, compared to earnings after graduation.

The committee believes similar information that may be required under the federal “Gainful Employment in a Recognized Occupation” regulation should be available to potential and current students regardless of whether an institution is Title IV eligible. Fully 40 percent of students enrolled in private occupational schools in Connecticut in AY 2012 did not fall under federal gainful employment regulations. On the community college side, there were 4,240 students enrolled in noncredit certificate programs in AY 2013, with no aggregated system that allows for program, tuition, and/or outcome comparisons.

Ensuring that students can be easily aware of the costs and outcomes of various programs would serve an important consumer protection function by providing potential students with better information before selecting a certificate program that is offered by multiple colleges or schools. The first step toward accomplishing this is to establish a single website that publishes basic comparative information by type of certificate program. **Therefore, the committee recommends:**

- 1. The Office of Higher Education shall develop and maintain a cost and outcome reporting system to provide information about all certificates awarded by public, private, and nonprofit institutions. Each entity shall provide the required data annually, to the office in a uniform format developed by the office. The office shall publish the data provided on its website that allows for basic comparisons to be made among similar types of certificate programs, as well as more detailed program information in a format determined by the office. The detailed profile shall include the following:**
  - a. tuition and fees for a student completing within the normal amount of time based on program length and full- or part-time attendance;**
  - b. typical costs for books and supplies (unless a part of tuition and fees) and the cost of room and board, if applicable;**
  - c. median loan debt incurred by students who completed a for-credit certificate program (separately by Title IV loans and other education debt, including private and institutional loans) and for students completing a noncredit program, if available;**
  - d. enrollments and awards by year;**

- e. **basic demographic information (gender, age, and race/ethnicity);**
- f. **graduation rates for student cohorts completing the program;**
- g. **average time to complete program;**
- h. **job placement rates for students completing the program;**
- i. **entry level starting salary, based on Connecticut DOL statistics;**
- j. **average salary, based on Connecticut DOL statistics;**
- k. **annual/cohort national certification pass rate, (if applicable); and**
- l. **state licensure pass rate, (if applicable).**

**It is further recommended by the committee:**

**Each college or private occupational school that offers a certificate program shall publish this information on its website as prominently as the certificate program description.**

Although some of this information is already available to potential and current students on the National Center for Education Statistics (under the U.S. Department of Education website), it is limited to Title IV funded schools and programs.<sup>27</sup>

In addition, the national webpage might not be known by students who are interested or enrolled in for-credit programs. The national webpage also has no information for noncredit community college certificate programs and private occupational schools that do not receive Title IV funds.

To ensure the fullest possible disclosure for individuals considering enrolling in a certificate program, information should be available to them at the time they request additional program information and/or an application packet. **Therefore, the committee also recommends that:**

2. **Each college or private occupational school shall develop a one-page fact sheet for each certificate program offered that provides basic information to the potential applicant. At a minimum, the fact sheet should include tuition, fees, books and supplies, as well as graduation and placement rates, and average student debt.**

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<sup>27</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, CollegeNavigator, <http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>

The committee believes the recommendation directing OHE to develop and maintain a system that provides comparative information across the public and the private system would be a valuable addition to increasing student awareness and promoting informed choice.

### **BOR's Process for Collecting and Reporting Certain Data about For-Credit and Noncredit Certificates is Unreliable and Not Comprehensive**

*The committee found several deficiencies related to the accurate reporting of community college certificate programs offered, student enrollments and completions, as well as certain financial aid and credit accumulation information.* These problems were discovered through PRI staff review of various student data for BOR for both for-credit and noncredit certificate programs offered within the community college system. Specific data problems are noted below.

#### **Noncredit Certificates**

- A complete dataset of student enrollment and completion for these programs could not be provided due to inconsistencies in how data are entered by the 12 colleges in the board's administrative system. The board provided information for a portion of its certificate programs -- 141 noncredit programs -- for which an audit trail could be verified. The board could not determine the total number of certificate programs offered in any given year or the total number of students who enrolled and completed noncredit certificate programs.
- For those noncredit programs that could be identified, BOR could not track a cohort of students enrolled in noncredit certificate programs at any college to determine completion rates or the length of time it took students to complete noncredit certificate programs.
- Data could not be provided on overall amounts of financial aid distributed for noncredit certificate programs by type of aid.<sup>28</sup>
- BOR does track some information on the number of noncredit certificate students who take national certification or state licensing examinations and the number who pass these exams. These are important outcome measures. However, PRI staff found that this information was not consistent across colleges. For example, according to data provided by BOR, the same certificate offered at different community colleges qualified students in some colleges to sit for a certification exam and in others colleges it did not. In addition, BOR could not track a cohort of students so that the number who took a certification or licensing exam could be compared to the number that passed. Thus, a passing rate could not be calculated.

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<sup>28</sup> Noncredit programs are not eligible for federal financial aid under Title IV but could be eligible for other types of federal aid, such as Workforce Investment Act funding, as well as institutional aid.

## For-Credit Certificates

- The board of regents was reluctant to provide specific data regarding the completion rates of for-credit certificate programs because it felt the data would be skewed. It is the board's view that many students who complete a certificate are enrolled in degree programs and meet the requirements for a certificate along the way. Some of these students may not have been formally enrolled in the certificate program and may receive a certificate and degree simultaneously. The board's data systems are not robust enough to identify these students or untangle this web of information. No data was offered on how many students may actually fall into this situation or regarding the completion rates for students who only obtain a for-credit certificate.
- Although BOR does collect some information on the number of noncredit certificate students who take national certification or state licensing examinations and the number who pass these exams, it does not attempt to do so with regard to for-credit certificate awardees. Similarly, placement rates of for-credit awardees are not tracked.
- BOR could not identify excess credits obtained by for-credit certificate students. Concerns are raised about student cost and system efficiency when students accumulate an excessive amount of credits for a certificate or degree program. Part of the difficulty is attributed by BOR to a sizeable portion of students working on an Associate's Degree and completing a certificate along the way. Credits may be earned in excess of the amount needed for a certificate but are necessary for a degree. However, many studies have been conducted that identify these excess credits among college students and various methodologies exist to measure this phenomenon. In addition, no data was offered that measures excess accumulation of credits for those who register for and only obtain a for-credit certificate.

BOR should be able to identify which and how many students are enrolled in certificate programs, the financial aid that is expended for them, and the program completion rates. Having an accurate understanding of program activities and outcomes is essential for good management of any enterprise.

Appropriate administrative systems allow management to monitor the performance of the organization, evaluate any deviations for expected or desired results, identify any necessary improvements, and implement corrective actions in a timely manner. A consequence of an ineffective data management system is that decision makers at all levels fail to accurately understand BOR's operations and the degree to which certificate programs are meeting the needs of students and the business community. **Therefore, the committee recommends:**

- 3. The board of regents should modify its current administrative systems and practices to permit an accurate accounting, tracking, and reporting of:**
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- a. **the number of students enrolled and awarded certificates on a for-credit and noncredit basis, as well as completion rates by certificate program on a cohort basis;**
- b. **the amount of financial aid received by students in certificate programs;**
- c. **an indication of the number of students accumulating excess credits in pursuit of a certificate;**
- d. **the length of time to completion for all students awarded certificates;**
- e. **the number of students who took certification and state licensing examinations, and the pass rates; and**
- f. **placement rates of certificate awardees to the extent possible through using the state's longitudinal student tracking system (P20 WIN).**

### **Similar Noncredit Certificate Programs Vary Considerably by Community College**

*The committee considerable variation both across and within for-credit and noncredit community college certificate programs in terms of identical program names but differences in the number of courses required for completion, prerequisites, activities that could be performed upon graduation, and tuition costs. Specifically:*

- some community colleges offer certain certificate programs on a for-credit basis, while others offer the same program only as noncredit;
- different community colleges had different tuition for the same noncredit certificate programs, even though many had the same number of course hours for completion;
- the number of hours or classes required for completion also varied for some of the same programs;
- some colleges included the price of text books, uniforms, and/or the cost of sitting for a national certification exam (if one exists) in program tuition, while others do not;
- certificate programs with the same name had different prerequisites for admission; and
- some programs with the same name had different course hours for completion that qualified graduates to perform different tasks and to sit for different national certification exams.

Here are some precise examples addressing the issues identified above:<sup>29</sup>

- A 23 for-credit (seven courses) Computer Programming certificate is offered by Manchester Community College. All of the credits can be applied toward an Associate's Degree if the student wishes to pursue further education. (Tuition for the seven for-credit courses was \$1,001.) On the other hand, Norwalk Community College also offers a Computer Programming certificate, but it is only offered as a noncredit program and so there are no credits can be applied toward a degree. It consists of three noncredit courses and tuition is \$1,047.
- Eleven colleges offer a Pharmacy Technician certificate. Most are 60 course hours, but some have additional hours. The cost for the certificate ranges from \$775 at Middlesex Community College (60 course hours) to \$1,474 at Asnuntuck Community College (72 course hours).
- The cost to sit for the national Pharmacy Technician certification exam (\$129) is included in tuition for the Pharmacy Technician certificate program at Housatonic Valley, while at Three Rivers, tuition covers only the course and the book, and at Tunxis Community College only the coursework is covered.
- A Patient Care Technician certificate was offered by 11 community colleges; one offers it as a for-credit program and the others as noncredit. In order to be admitted to the Patient Care Technician program at Capital Community College, the applicant must already be a certified nurse aide (CNA) and the program cost is \$999. However, at Norwalk Community College, becoming a CNA is part of its Patient Care Technician certification program, along with having the student complete phlebotomy and EKG course and practica and a "customer service for health care professional" course, with tuition of \$2,546. Upon completion of the program, students are eligible for phlebotomy and EKG national certification and state-certification as a CNA.
- Gateway Community College has a Patient Care Technician certificate program with tuition costs of \$2,250. Four national certifications can be earned upon successful completion of the three classes in this program: CNA State License; EKG National License; Phlebotomy National License; and the National License for Patient Care Technician.
- At Norwalk Community College the Phlebotomy Technician certificate program is 75 hours (45 hours of classroom and 30 hours of clinical internship), with tuition of \$999. It prepares students to sit for the national certification exam. Tunxis Community College also offers a Phlebotomy

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<sup>29</sup> The examples were taken directly from spring 2014, fall 2014, and spring 2015 community college program catalogues, and spring 2015 individual college websites, as well as databases provided by BOR.

Technician certificate program which prepares students to take the national certification exam, but the program is 150 hours and costs \$1,850 – double the hours of the Norwalk program and tuition is almost twice as much.

While the committee understands that the community colleges need and are designed to have flexibility to shape noncredit certificate programs to employer need in their region, the committee believes this variation creates problems for potential, current, and former students, as well as employers, for several reasons. First, when individuals are considering enrolling in a program, they should be aware that the cost and hours for completion for similarly named certificate programs may be different depending on the college they select. Second, students that graduate from one program in the state and another student that graduates from a program identically named but granted from a different college might have two very different sets of qualifications. Third, employers may not recognize these differences. They therefore might not understand that a certificate from one college does not necessarily mean the qualifications are the same as a certification from another community college. This is particularly true if the job applicant pool can be drawn from graduates of more than one community college in the employers' region.

*The committee found the price variation among noncredit certificate programs that provide graduates with the same qualification can be significant.* The committee believes that when there are critical differences among similarly named certificate programs, students and area employers, should be aware of these differences prior to enrollment. **Therefore, the committee recommends:**

- 4. The Board of Regents for Higher Education shall appoint a workgroup composed of continuing education deans from the community colleges to undertake a review of all community college noncredit certificate programs. The workgroup's goal should be to design a uniform naming convention to easily distinguish between noncredit certificate programs with similar and different requirements within the same field of study. Programs that vary should be distinguished using a Level I, Level II (or similar) approach so that enhanced certificate program requirements and qualifications earned are recognized and naming of programs is uniform.**

**In addition, tuition of similarly named certificate programs leading to the same qualifications should be periodically reviewed to determine if the cost variations are reasonable.**

**Cost of similar noncredit programs.** Since noncredit community college programs are maintained by each college, students most likely find it difficult to identify the differences among similarly named programs offered by different colleges. The PRI committee found that trying to locate even just the cost of enrolling in a noncredit certificate program was very difficult. Some colleges do not provide cost information on their websites but requesting the potential applicants telephone the school for more information. When staff did locate the certificate program cost on a community college website, it was often several layers or "clicks" into it, making it difficult to find. Furthermore, a potential student looking to enroll in a

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certificate program would need to examine each individual college website in order to compare the cost and hours needed for graduation because there is no aggregated information available by the board of regents on noncredit programs.

PRI staff did find a few good examples of easily located information on noncredit certificate costs and requirements. Housatonic Valley Community College has links that show costs of each noncredit program in a single place and can be easily found on the website. **Similar to the recommendation made for private occupational schools, the committee recommends:**

**5. The board of regents should ensure the 12 community college websites' easily identify noncredit certificate program costs.**

Another issue that was discussed in interviews held by PRI staff with continuing education deans was that many students enroll in certificate programs that have a national certification examination. Students may only sit for the exam upon completion of the coursework. However the deans noted that one barrier to obtaining the national certification is that students often cannot afford to pay the fee to sit for the exam. According to the deans, the longer a student postpones taking the exam, the higher the rate of exam failure. Some colleges, like Housatonic Valley, include the cost of taking the national exam in the overall noncredit program costs so that students are eligible to sit immediately after coursework is completed, and potentially maximum exam performance. **The committee believes that this is a best practice and should be replicated across programs requiring a national certification in order for the graduate to secure employment, and therefore recommends:**

**6. Community colleges should consider including the cost of sitting for a national certification, if applicable, as part of the noncredit tuition and fees for the certificate program.**

*Other barriers.* There are several other strategies that are either being discussed or have been endorsed by the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission (CETC) that will increase the number of students completing certificate programs in order to fill the skills gap that is projected to exist by 2018.<sup>30</sup> These strategies are aimed at accelerating a student's path from education to employment. Current work by CETC has included:

- promoting programs that incorporate a contextualized learning component (i.e, the concept of relating subject matter content to meaningful situations that are relevant to students' lives.);
- encouraging partnerships between high schools and community colleges so that students can dually obtain a certificate upon graduation from high school or shortly thereafter; and

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<sup>30</sup> A prominent workforce study has indicated that in Connecticut 65 percent of all jobs will require some type of postsecondary education beyond high school by 2018. The most recent figures indicate Connecticut's postsecondary education attainment level is about 56 percent. (Anthony Carnevale, Nicole Smith, and Jeff Strohl. 2010. *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce).

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- endorsement of funding for technical career certificate programs that lead to an industry recognized credential upon passage of a state, regional, or national certification or licensure.

Although beyond the scope of this study, the committee recognizes that these strategies incorporate best practices and are aimed at ensuring “middle-skill” workers are available to meet workforce demands. Therefore, the committee endorses the efforts of CETC to examine and recommend strategies and programs that effectively address barriers to career advance that lead to high-paying jobs.

### **Approval Process for New Noncredit Certificate Programs Varies Among the Community Colleges**

The Board of Regents must formally approve new for-credit certificate programs on forms submitted by a community college when a college is seeking to offer a new program or discontinue a program. For-credit certificate programs, like these and associate degree programs, originate from local campus curriculum development efforts in consultation with local advisory committees whose members include representatives from local business and industry. New programs and modifications undergo a rigorous licensing and accreditation approval process that begins with local campus governance structures. That step is followed by a review by academic leaders across the system, a review and recommendation by the Academic and Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Regents, and finally a review and recommendation by the full board.

*For noncredit certificate programs, however, each individual community college determines whether to offer a new program, sets graduation requirements, develops curricula to be used, and establishes cost of tuition and fees. This gives the college more flexibility to quickly offer new programs without having a formal BOR approval process and helps to keep tuition rates low since accreditation and other requirements do not need to be met.*

*The committee believes the authority to approve new noncredit certificate programs should remain at the community college level. There are several benefits to allowing each college to determine the need for and the design of noncredit certificate programs, including creating programs that respond to regional employer need. The committee also believes that uniformity among colleges on the types of information that is examined before approving a new noncredit certificate program should be similar from college to college by standardizing the type of information that is reviewed at the time the program is being developed and the criteria used for approval.*

Manchester Community College staff provided PRI with a form that must be completed by each relevant department within the college when it proposes a new noncredit certificate program. Similar to the academic approval questions that must be answered by the college before BOR will approve a new program, the continuing education dean reviews a variety of factors prior to approving a new noncredit program to ensure program enrollment will be adequate to cover the costs of the instructor, and that there is sufficient employer demand for graduates.

While the twelve community colleges in the state likely gather this information prior to approving a new noncredit certificate program, the committee believes it should be collected in a consistent manner so that each college applies similar criteria prior to program approval.

A review like that used by the Manchester Community College Continuing Education Department could be adopted across the community colleges to help them determine whether a new noncredit certificate program should be offered. **To facilitate this discussion, the committee recommends:**

- 7. The Dean of Continuing Education of each of the community colleges, or his or her designee, should establish a workgroup to design a standard form that can be used, internally, by each of the community colleges in reviewing new noncredit programs to determine if the certificate should be approved. The review form should include, but not be limited to the following:**
  - **number of courses needed for completion;**
  - **course tuition and fees;**
  - **minimum/maximum number of students to make course economically viable;**
  - **labor market information that confirms demand, including supporting Connecticut Department of Labor data on employment demand;**
  - **community college advisory board recommendations;**
  - **names of local employers contacted and responses, with a requirement to contact at least three employers;**
  - **availability of similar programs, including location, tuition, and enrollment numbers;**
  - **how the program will be marketed to students;**
  - **source of curriculum and how the department will ensure it is up-to-date and relevant to the certificate program;**
  - **the proposed credentials of potential instructors and how recruitment will be handled; and**
  - **any other considerations.**

### **BOR Does Not Have a Definition of Certificates**

*The committee found that the board of regents does not have an official written definition or clearly defined purpose of certificates that can be communicated to all college deans and academic administrators. This appears to be an oversight. The board of regents does have written procedures that guide certain aspects of the certificate approval process, they the procedures do not actually define a certificate or its purpose.*

In interviews with BOR staff, certificate programs were generally described as having a defined group or sequence of courses that focus on an area of specialized knowledge and have a career or occupational focus. As noted earlier, certificates commonly emphasize acquisition of specific skills and knowledge that can be readily transferred to the workforce.

Definitions are important because they enable an organization to have a common understanding of a word or subject. They allow all involved to be on the same page when discussing an issue or in this case in developing and offering certificate programs.

Faulty or confusion about definitions can lead to business problems. Business processes are operated by individuals. Without direction, individuals can act in a subjective manner and be prone to interpretation and assumption when complete information is lacking.

Properly defining certificates and their purpose influences the potential success of educational certificates. This is because the process involves determining what is and is not included as a component of a certificate, the value they will provide, who will benefit, how BOR will know if they are successful, and an appropriate approval process. **Therefore, the committee recommends that:**

- 8. The board of regents should develop a written definition and defined purpose of for-credit and noncredit educational certificates.**

### **BOR Has No Comprehensive, Coordinated Marketing Plan for Certificate Programs**

A persistent question asked by many is why potential students would select a relatively higher cost private occupational school certificate program over the same generally lower cost community college program? Many of the community college administrators interviewed by The committee believes that part of the answer lies in the fact that many students are not aware of the options offered at community colleges. *The committee found marketing efforts for certificate programs are not comprehensive and not coordinated among the state's 12 community colleges.* There is no board of regent's plan.

Administrators at three community colleges described their marketing tactics for the noncredit certificate programs based largely on ad hoc or historical approaches. Certificate programs have been often grouped with information about the larger continuing education offerings. The use of mail flyers, newspaper ads, and website updates were the most commonly cited techniques. Most administrators thought the newspaper advertisements and mail flyers were the most effective for noncredit certificate programs.

No specific formal marketing strategies for certificate programs had been developed among those colleges interviewed but one dean did state that she was thinking of developing a more comprehensive and strategic marketing plan. The amount expended for marketing efforts on behalf of the certificate programs at these colleges was not readily available. There was not any comparative information among different colleges to know what strategies were being used or any metrics to know how successful they were.

Higher education is a very competitive arena with robust private sector players, including for-profit providers. The increasing variety of approaches to learning, combined with an array of

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student preferences, means institutions must be able to clearly and quickly convey how their programs align with student needs. The for-profit providers are major competitors for the community colleges. A recent report regarding the for-profit higher education industry, issued by the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, determined that the 30 companies examined in the report spent less on student instruction than on marketing and advertising. On average, the for-profit colleges analyzed spent almost 23 percent of all revenue on marketing and advertising, far more than most public institutions, the report said, while spending 17 percent on instruction - an average of about \$2,050 per student.<sup>31</sup>

A major purpose of a coordinated marketing plan is to establish a specific direction in marketing and have it synchronized among the 12 community colleges. The goals of marketing should align with the community colleges' broader strategic objectives. For example, student enrollment at the community colleges has been declining over the last several years. Gaining a larger share of the educational market, increasing awareness among potential students, and building favorable attitudes should be common objectives of any marketing plan. Some assumptions about how to best reach potential students may need to be tested. Though generally declining, the use of postcards and mailings may have their place among certain segments of potential students. However, a more data-driven approach that includes the strategic use of social media and mobile-based applications should be considered. **Therefore, the committee recommends that:**

- 9. The board of regents should consider developing a more comprehensive approach to make potential students aware of certificate offerings by developing a marketing plan for certificate programs for the 12 community college system. The plan should provide enough direction to ensure alignment with the board's strategic goals for the system as a whole but flexible enough to recognize the unique market segments which each colleges serves.**

### **OHE Does Not Audit Certain Student Data**

The Office of Higher Education provides consumer protection for students and potential students at private occupational schools, hospital-based schools, and barber/hairdresser schools in Connecticut. As part of its general oversight responsibility, the office collects student enrollment, graduation, and placement data, as well as certain financial information from private occupational schools. Program review staff obtained this student data to perform a portion of its occupational school analysis. *These data are self-reported and PRI staff noted earlier that OHE does not audit or confirm the accuracy of this student data beyond a basic cursory review.*

The committee is also recommending (see previous recommendation) that additional student and institutional data be collected and combined in a reporting system that would provide comprehensive information about the institutions that offer certificate programs. This type of data provides important information to: consumers that can influence student choice; policymakers about how this aspect of the postsecondary education system is operating; and

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<sup>31</sup> U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, *For Profit Higher Education: The Failure to Safeguard the Federal Investment and Ensure Student Success*, July 30, 2012.

institutions themselves for competitive comparison purposes. The integrity of this data effort must be ensured through a verification process.

Auditing would provide an independent check on the accuracy of the numbers provided by the schools and colleges required to provide data. An official examination and verification of student data would help to ensure the accuracy of what is reported to OHE. Inaccurate data leads to misunderstandings about school and college operations. **Therefore, the committee recommends that:**

- 10. The Office of Higher Education shall develop a program to audit at least a sample of student data from sub-baccalaureate certificate programs of private occupational schools, schools of hairdressing, hospitals-based schools, and the independent colleges and universities on an annual basis.<sup>32</sup>**

### **OHE Curriculum Evaluators Are Not Paid**

OHE's regulatory oversight responsibilities include the authorization of private occupational schools to operate in Connecticut as well as approval over those schools' program modifications. The authorization review process includes an examination of various financial, property, employee, and academic information. A critical component of this review is an evaluation of the curriculum for each certificate program. This includes a detailed assessment of courses to be offered, course outlines and syllabi, methods of course delivery, length of courses and overall program, and the qualifications of instructors.

*The committee found that OHE relies on volunteers to provide expertise in performing curriculum assessments.* The range of subject matter that OHE must review can be very technical, ranging from mechanical and information technologies to medical specialties. Having in-house staff to perform reviews requiring such a varied skill set would not be practical or even desirable. However, there is no budget to pay evaluators. OHE may call upon other state agencies to assist in the reviews where possible. For example, an employee from the Department of Motor Vehicles may review tractor trailer schools and an employee from the Department of Public Health may assist with curriculum for Certified Nursing Assistants.

The office performs approximately 25 to 30 curriculum reviews annually. While OHE reports that it has always eventually been able to find someone to assist, there are areas where it struggles to find appropriate evaluators. This struggle has been particularly true in the medical and information technology certificate fields and construction fields (tradesman). The reviews can be demanding requiring several hours of reviewing numerous documents and includes site evaluations. OHE has stated that they rely on individuals taking time off from work or getting permission from employers to perform reviews. At times, reviews have been delayed because of the evaluator's full-time job demands. Concerns have also been voiced regarding the use of retirees, one of the strategies the office uses. These individuals may not always be up to date on current technology or trends in a given field.

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<sup>32</sup> The independent colleges and universities include the nonprofit and for-profit institutions of higher education that operate in Connecticut. It does not include public or federal institutions.

Not having the right person perform these curriculum assessments invites the potential risk of inappropriate course content being taught by unqualified personnel. This could result in graduates with the wrong skill set for the marketplace that would be not only a loss to the student in time and money but, in sufficient volume, a loss to the wider Connecticut economy. **Therefore, the committee recommends that:**

- 11. The Office of Higher Education should develop a cost estimate to fund curriculum evaluators, where needed, and submit such an estimate to the committees of the General Assembly that have cognizance over postsecondary education and appropriations. The office should explore the possibility of using of the private occupational school student protection account to fund this request.<sup>33</sup>**

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<sup>33</sup> The private occupational school student protection account is funded by an assessment on occupational school's tuition revenue. The account allows any student enrolled in such a school who is unable to complete a course or unit of instruction at a school because of the insolvency or cessation of operation of the school to apply to the Office of Higher Education for a refund of tuition from the account (C.G.S. Sec. 10a-22u).

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# **APPENDICIES**



# Appendix A

## Postsecondary Institutions Included in This Study

<b>Table A-1. Public Community Colleges and Online College</b>		
	<i>College</i>	<i>Location</i>
1	Asnuntuck Community College	Enfield
2	Capital Community College	Hartford
3	Gateway Community College	New Haven
4	Housatonic Community College	Bridgeport
5	Manchester Community College	Manchester
6	Middlesex Community College	Middletown
7	Naugatuck Valley Community College	Waterbury
8	Northwestern Connecticut Community College	Winsted
9	Norwalk Community College	Norwalk
10	Quinebaug Valley Community College	Danielson
11	Three Rivers Community College	Norwich
12	Tunxis Community College	Farmington
13	Charter Oak State College	New Britain

Source OHE

<b>Table A-3. Private Occupational Schools</b>			
	<i>School</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Title IV Eligible</i>
1	A. B. Training Center, LLC	Waterford	
2	Academy of Medical Training, LLC	Waterbury	
3	Academy of Medical Training, LLC (Branch)	Hamden	
4	Affordable CDL Training School	Colchester	
5	Allstate Commercial Driver Training School	Seymour	
6	American Institute of Healthcare & Technology, LLC	Stratford	
7	American Professional Educational Services, Inc.	Norwich	
8	American Red Cross Vocational School	New Haven	
9	- American Red Cross Vocational School (Branch)	Bethel	
10	- American Red Cross Vocational School (Branch)	Bridgeport	
11	- American Red Cross Vocational School (Branch)	East Hartford	
12	- American Red Cross Vocational School (Branch)	Waterbury	
13	Bartenders Academy LLC	Waterbury	
14	- Bartenders Academy LLC (Branch)	Fairfield	
15	Boston Bartenders School of America	Hamden	
16	Boston Bartenders School of America	Wethersfield	

<b>Table A-3. Private Occupational Schools</b>			
	<i>School</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Title IV Eligible</i>
17	Branford Hall Career Institute	Branford	Y
18	- Branford Hall Career Institute (Branch)	Southington	Y
19	- Branford Hall Career Institute (Branch)	Windsor	Y
20	CFA Floral Design School	Monroe	
21	Connecticut Center For Arts and Technology	New Haven	
22	Connecticut Center for Massage Therapy, Inc.	Newington	Y
23	- Connecticut Center for Massage Therapy, Inc. (Branch)	Groton	Y
24	- Connecticut Center for Massage Therapy, Inc. (Branch)	Westport	Y
25	Connecticut Computer Service, Inc.	Plantsville	
26	Connecticut Computer Service, Inc. (Branch)	East Hartford	
27	Connecticut K-9 Education Center	Newington	
28	Connecticut Public Broadcasting, Inc. Institute for Advanced Media	Hartford	
29	Connecticut School of Bartending, Inc.	Norwich	
30	Connecticut School of Broadcasting - Farmington	Farmington	
31	Connecticut School of Broadcasting Stratford	Stratford	
32	Connecticut School of Integrative Manual Therapy, Inc.	West Hartford	
33	Construction Education Center, Inc	Rocky Hill	
34	Cook's Nurse Aide Training Program	Plymouth	
35	Danae's Training Center	New Haven	
36	Dent-Temp Careers, LLC	Stratford	
37	Dorsey Training Direct, LLC	Bridgeport	
38	Eastern Connecticut Radio Academy Broadcasting School	Willimantic	
39	Educational Training of Wethersfield	Wethersfield	
40	- Educational Training of Wethersfield at New London (Branch)	New London	
41	Fox Institute of Business, Inc. d/b/a American Institute	West Hartford	Y
42	Greater Hartford Orthodontic Assistant Training Academy	Wethersfield	
43	Harris School of Business	Danbury	
44	ICES, Inc dba Advantage Career Training	Naugatuck	
45	Independent Connecticut Petroleum Association Ed Found., Inc., d/b/a ENTECH Advanced Energy Training	Cromwell	
46	Industrial Management & Training Institute	Waterbury	Y
47	Institute of Aesthetic Arts and Sciences	Southbury	
48	Institute of Allied Medical Professions	Stamford	
49	Institute of Children's Literature	West Redding	
50	Institute of Environmental Management and Technology, Inc.	Shelton	
51	Jewelry & Watch Repair School of New England	Manchester	

**Table A-3. Private Occupational Schools**

	<i>School</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Title IV Eligible</i>
52	John Casablancas Modeling & Career Center	Rocky Hill	
53	Labco School of Dental Assisting, Plus	Derby	
54	Lincoln Technical Institute - Hartford (Lincoln Culinary Institute)	Hartford	Y
55	Lincoln Technical Institute	New Britain	Y
56	- Lincoln Technical Institute (Branch)	East Windsor	Y
57	- Lincoln Technical Institute (Branch)	Hamden	Y
58	- Lincoln Technical Institute (Lincoln Culinary Institute) (Branch)	Shelton	Y
59	Long Ridge Writers Group	West Redding	
60	Med-Care Training	Brookfield	
61	Medical Coding Academy, LLC	New Haven	
62	National Personal Training Institute, Inc.	Norwalk	
63	New England Tractor Trailer Training School of CT	Somers	Y
64	- New England Tractor Trailer Training School (Branch)	Bridgeport	Y
65	Porter & Chester Institute	Stratford	Y
66	- Porter & Chester Institute (Branch)	Enfield	Y
67	- Porter & Chester Institute (Branch)	Rocky Hill	Y
68	- Porter & Chester Institute (Branch)	Watertown	Y
69	Porter and Chester Institute of Branford	Branford	Y
70	Professional Dental Assistant School	Norwalk	
71	Ridley-Lowell	New London	Y
72	- Ridley-Lowell (Branch)	Danbury	Y
73	School of Interior Redesign LLC	Beacon Falls	
74	Stone Academy	West Haven	Y
75	- Stone Academy (Branch)	East Hartford	Y
76	- Stone Academy (Branch)	Waterbury	Y
77	Stormwater One, LLC	Meriden	
78	The C.N.A. Preparatory School	West Haven	
79	Valley Medical Institute	Bridgeport	

Source: OHE, As of May 2014



### Data Sets

Information on the types of certificate programs offered and the students enrolled in certificate programs was provided by four sources for the July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013 academic year (AY): 1) BOR for the community colleges and Charter Oak State College; 2) OHE for the private occupational schools; 3) the P20 WIN system accessed by DOL, who linked a cohort of students that had graduated from community college certificate programs with pre- and post-graduate wage data; and 4) Goodwin College on the types of certificate programs it offers.

Because there is no single entity that compiles information on certificate programs in the state, the data varies, even within the board of regents – information on certificate programs and student demographics available differs between for-credit programs and noncredit. In addition, each data set had caveats associated with it, which are noted below.

*Board of Regents.* The board of regents provided PRI staff with community college certificate student enrollment and completion data for both for-credit and noncredit programs. The board noted several caveats related to the ability to analyze the databases including that they do not:

- allow for a cohort of students enrolled in certificate programs to be tracked to determine completion rates (meaning a group of students who began a program at the same time is followed to identify those same students who completed the program). The board of regents maintains that most of the certificate students do not fall into traditional enrollment models. These students earn certificates while obtain an associate's degree and were never formally enrolled in a certificate program. In the board's view, this prevents the calculation of a completion rate; and
- identify if a state or national exam is required to enter the occupational field, and if so, the percent of students passing the test.

The board also noted an additional caveat when interpreting the noncredit certificate completion data. The completion rate may also be undercounted because some students move from noncredit to for-credit programs of study before completing the noncredit program. These students should be measured as successful, but instead are counted as non-completers, which skews noncredit certificate completion statistics.

While preparing the data for PRI staff, the board found that many noncredit student enrollments and awards granted were not accounted for in its data system because most of the data is maintained by each individual college. As a result, the board indicated that the numbers reported to PRI staff underrepresent the noncredit certificate program activity that actually occurred at any given community college and may only be interpreted as the minimum number of noncredit completions. It is worth pointing out that the community colleges do respond to a number of competing data priorities. However, information regarding noncredit certificate

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programs' demographic, financial, and accountability data has not been a primary concern of the board nor of policymakers in general. The board's staff at all 12 of the community colleges and the central office made a significant investment in time and resources to try provide the committee with the most reliable and valid data possible. The board indicated to PRI staff that the board is working to correct this flaw in the system and expects to have more complete data by next year.

Finally, the board had to revise the data provided to committee staff several times in order to provide the most accurate information. The last revision to the for-credit data was on October 22, and for to the noncredit data, November 25.

*Private occupational schools.* Private occupational school student enrollment, completion, and placement data were collected through an annual survey administered by the Office of Higher Education and certain student demographic data were collected by OHE using a survey instrument developed by PRI. A total of 46 out of 57 schools (80 percent) and their associated branches provided survey data for AY 2013. Not all schools provided data for each question, the data are self-reported to OHE, and the data was not audited for accuracy. In addition, information about student pass rates on national certification and state licensing exams was not available. Certain data on enrollments, awards, and placements were provided in July and revisions to the AY 2013 data were made and received in October and November. Data on demographic characteristics was received in October, with revisions also made in October.

*Charter Oak State College and Goodwin College.* PRI staff received a portion of requested data from Goodwin College in December, which did not allow enough time for an exploration of the data. Both Charter Oak State College and Goodwin College offer a very limited number of certificate programs. For these reasons, information on their certificate programs is not included in the body of this report, but will be provided in the final report.

*Department of Labor.* Although PRI staff began working with DOL and BOR staff in early August in order to fulfill the committee's charge to examine the alignment between certificate graduates and employment following graduation, DOL did not provide needed data until December 2014, leaving committee staff little time to evaluate it.

In addition, DOL staff was unable to provide additional data that was requested by PRI staff in July on: 1) overall job supply and demand projections; and 2) wage data for sectors and/or occupations where a certificate was either required or desired by an employer.

## Outcomes for Community College For-Credit Certificate Graduates

In this appendix, PRI staff present information on certain outcomes for community college for-credit certificate completers. PRI staff requested data from both BOR and DOL to examine employment and wage outcomes of students completing certificates by type of academic program from AYs 2010 through 2014. The purpose was to understand whether education certificate programs were successful in moving individuals into employment in Connecticut and to know in what industries the students were working post-completion. Upon PRI's request and using the state's longitudinal student data system (Preschool through 20 and Workforce Information Network, known as P20 WIN), BOR submitted student level data to DOL for matching to employment, wage and industry data. DOL aggregated the data and provided it to PRI analysts. In addition to only releasing aggregated data to PRI, an additional safeguard was followed in that no outcome was reported if it applied to less than six students, to protect the confidentiality of individuals.

It should be noted that the for-credit community college certificate completers represent only about 11 percent of all certificate completers for that time period. Both noncredit community college and private occupational school certificate outcomes could not be analyzed because social security numbers are not collected for those students completing these types of certificate programs. In addition, the private occupational schools are not members of the P20 WIN system.

The analysis below is limited due to the level of data that was provided and time constraints, because, although PRI staff requested the data in August, it was not received until December, just a few days before the report was to be given to the committee. PRI staff attempted to obtain data on the occupational level (i.e., 6-digit CIP code)<sup>1</sup> which would be the most detailed information but the data was suppressed due to the limited number of students that would fall into each category. Even for the higher instruction level data that are presented below (i.e., 2-digit CIP code), there was significant suppression of data. The most recent data from AYs 2012 and 2013 are presented below. Data for AY 2014 were incomplete and was not included.

### Data Results in Brief

The six types of employment outcomes for community college for-credit certificate completers for AYs 2012 and 2013 are presented in Figure B-1. In general, the data show:

- less than one percent of completers were unemployed both before and after completing a certificate program;

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<sup>1</sup> The federal government developed a classification system (called the Classification of Instructional Programs, commonly referred to as CIP) that allows for the grouping of similar degree and certificate programs across the country despite variations in name and content. The classification methodology allows for groupings by broad instructional study areas, as well as groupings related to specific occupations.

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- seven percent of certificate completers were unemployed before enrolling in a certificate programs and found employment after later;
- of the certificate completers that were employed before enrolling in a certificate program:
  - 20 percent stayed with the same employer after completion;
  - 30 percent changed employer but stayed in the same industry;
  - about 25 percent changed the industry they were working in after completion; and
- for nearly 20 percent of the certificate completers, their social security numbers did not match any of DOL’s wage records. This could mean these people were: self-employed; unemployed, but not collecting unemployment, and living in Connecticut; living out-of-state and either employed or not; or deceased.

Table B-1 shows the four most common instructional areas in which the certificate completers were enrolled and the industries in which they were employed. The most common areas were the same regardless of outcome:

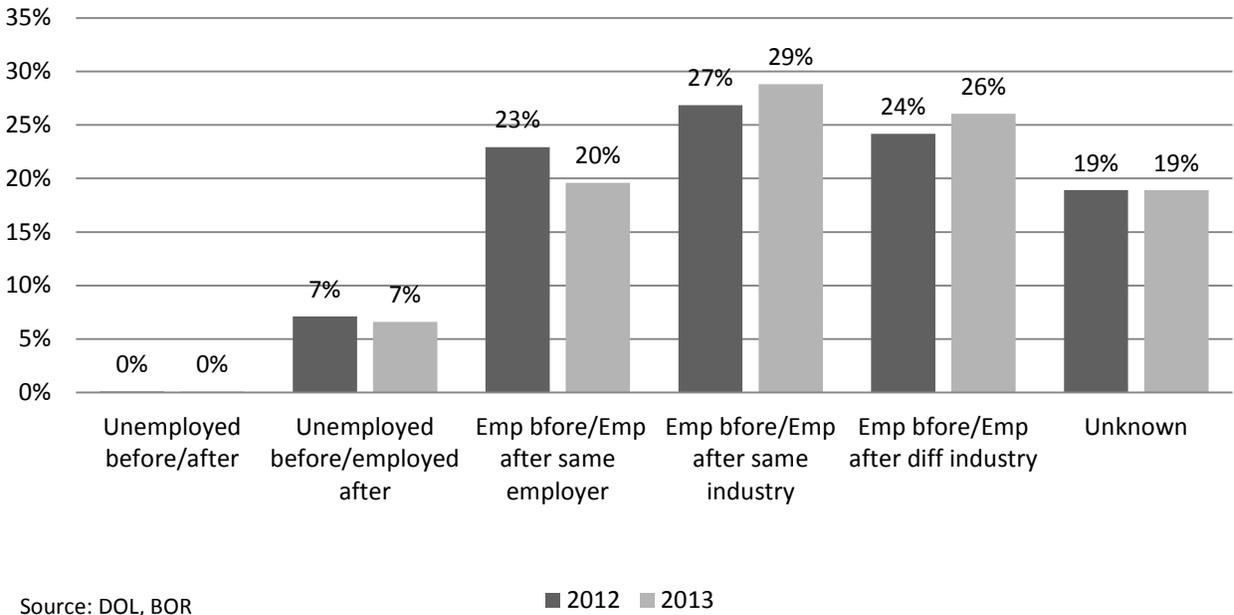
1. *Engineering Technologies and Engineering-Related Fields;*
2. *Health Professions and Related Programs;*
3. *Business, Management, Marketing, and Related Support Services;* and
4. *Family and Consumer Sciences/Human Sciences.*

The three most common industries that certificate holders were employed in were: Manufacturing, Administrative Support, and Health Care

Finally, Figures B-3 through B-5 show the changes in average quarterly wage six months before completion of a certificate program and six months and one year after completion of the certificate program for each of the different types of employment outcomes in Figure B-1. (Note that the wages six months before completion are not recorded for those who were unemployed.)

In general, it should be noted that there was a wage increase in all but one outcome for certificate completers. That one outcome is presented in Figure B-3. It shows a slight decrease in average wage for those certificate completers who stayed with the same employer at the 1 year mark compared to the wage six months before, but is still higher than the average wage six months before certificate completion.

**Figure B-1. Community College For-Credit Certificate Completers by Employment Outcome, AYs 2012 (N= 1,195) and 2013 (N=1,586)**

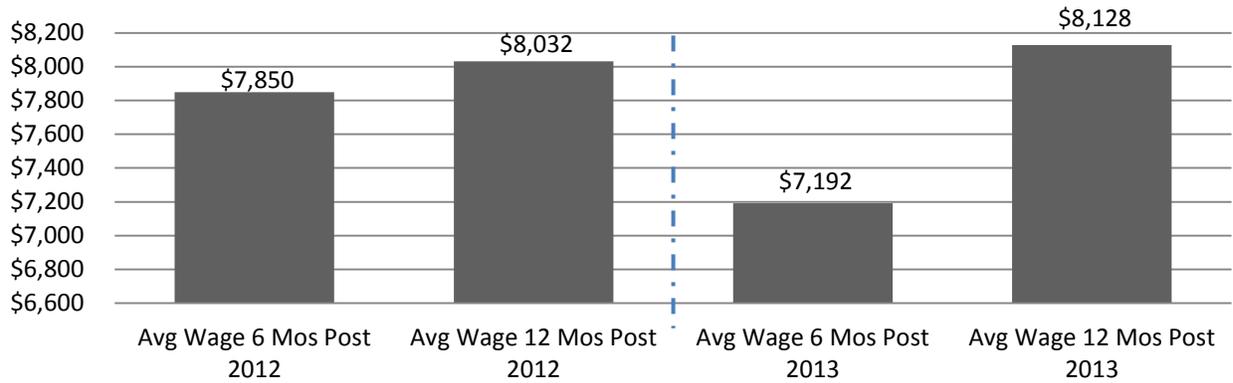


**Table B-1. Most Common Instructional Areas and Industries, AYs 2012 and 2013**

<i>Most Common Instructional Areas</i>	<i>Most Common Industries</i>
Engineering Technologies & Engineering-Related Fields	Manufacturing
Health Professions & Related Programs	Administrative Support
Business, Management, Marketing, & Related Support Services	Health Care
Family & Consumer Sciences/Human Sciences	

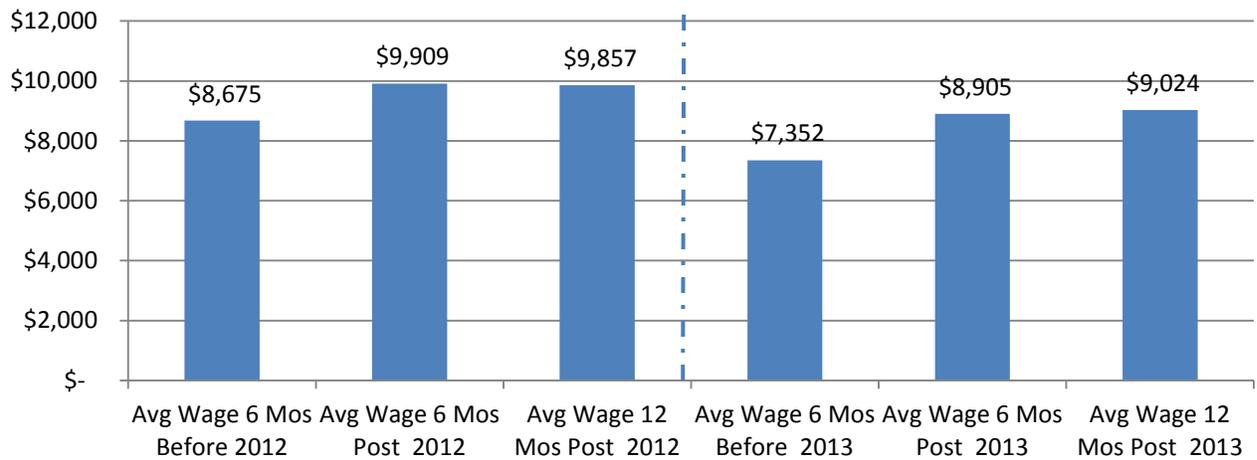
Source: DOL, BOR

**Figure B-2. Completers Unemployed Before and Employed After, Average Quarterly Wage Six Months and One Year After Award, AYs 2012 and 2013**



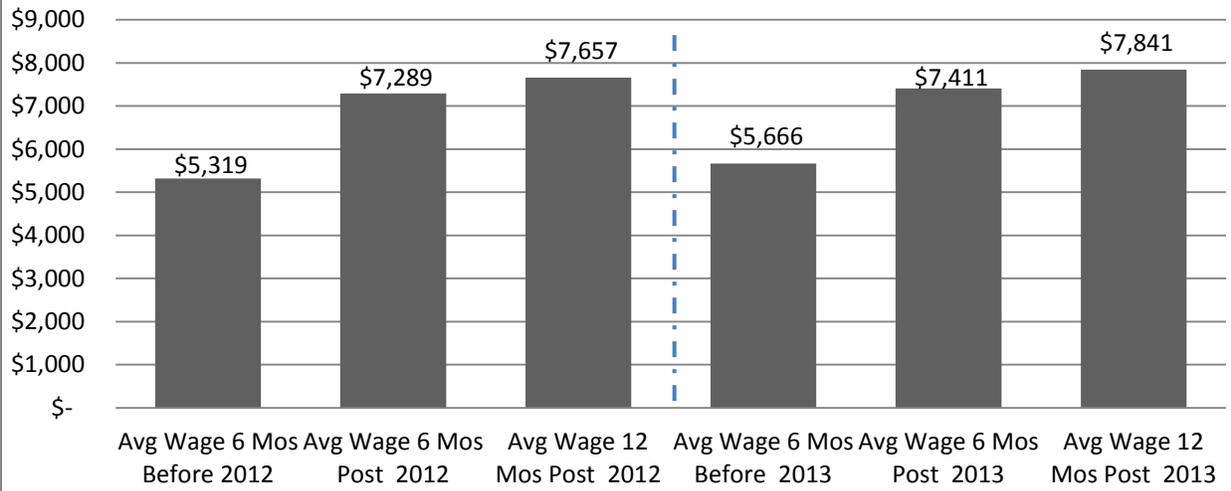
Source: DOL, BOR

**Figure B-3. Completers Employed Before and Employed After with Same Employer: Average Quarterly Wage Six Months Before Award; Six Months After; and One Year After Award, AYs 2012 and 2013**



Source: DOL, BOR

**Figure B-4. Completers Employed Before and Employed After Different Employer Same Industry: Average Quarterly Wage Six Months Before Award; Six Months After; and One Year After Award, AYs 2012 and 2013**



Source: DOL, BOR



## Charter Oak and Goodwin College Profiles

Below are profiles of Charter Oak State College, the state's online public institution of higher learning, and Goodwin College, one of the state's accredited nonprofit institutions of higher education.

### Charter Oak State College

Charter Oak State College is a public liberal arts college in New Britain, Connecticut. The college was founded in 1973 by the Connecticut Legislature and offers sub-baccalaureate certificate programs, associate and baccalaureate degrees. In 2011, the Connecticut Legislature reorganized the state system of higher education, combining the twelve community colleges, the four state universities, and Charter Oak State College under one governing board called the Board of Regents. Charter Oak State College is Connecticut's distance learning degree program, the state's online public institution of higher education. It has no campus and offers no on-ground classroom instruction

The Board of Regents for Higher Education provided PRI staff with enrollment data for sub-baccalaureate for-credit certificate programs for fall 2012 and 2013, because at the time that was on only information captured by the system.<sup>1</sup> Information on awards presented to students during AY 2013 (July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013) is also provided.

### Student Enrollment

**Enrollments and demographics.** While Charter Oak State College is not a large producer of sub-baccalaureate certificate program graduates, the enrollment data shows that during this time-period there were:

- 50 students were enrolled over the two year time period;
  - 30 during fall 2012;
  - 20 during fall 2013;
- almost all students were part-time, with only 2 of the 50 enrolled full time; and
- females accounted for the majority of the 50 students enrolled (68 percent);

Race/ethnicity was not recorded for 19 of the 50 students enrolled. For those students that information was available, the breakdown was:

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the system could not produce reliable enrollment data earlier than that because prior to that students were listed as non-matriculated and were not captured in the database. The data also only includes students that were registered during this time frame (i.e., enrolled in a class).

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- 4 Asian students;
- 6 Black or African American students;
- 4 Hispanic/Latino students; and
- 17 White students.

**Certificate programs offered by enrollment and gender.** The college offered 10 certificate programs during the fall 2012 and fall 2013 period. Table D-1 shows enrollment by program, and gender.

<b>Table D-1 Students Enrolled in Charter Oak State College Certificate Programs: Fall 2012 and Fall 2013</b>			
<i>Certificate Program</i>	<i>Total Students Enrolled</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Computer and Information Systems	6	2	4
Education	2	1	1
Health Care	11	1	10
Legal Assistant/ Paralegal	1	1	0
Long Term Care	1	0	1
Management Science	23	8	15
Medical Insurance Coding	3	1	2
Surveying Technology	3	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>34</b>
Source: BOR			

**Length of certificate program for those enrolled.** In terms of the certificate length, a slight majority of the programs were between 15 and 30 credits (52 percent), which is equivalent to one to two semesters. The remainder was less than 15 credits. There were no programs that exceeded 30 credits.

### **Awards Granted to Students**

**Awards and demographics.** PRI committee staff analyzed data provided by BOR on all awards granted to students during AY 2013 (July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013). The award data shows that during the time-period examined:

- 175 students received awards;
  - 40 during the July - December 2012 school period;
  - 135 from January – June 2013;
  - females accounted for the majority of the 174 students granted an award (73 percent); and
  - average age of student when award was granted was 42 years old.

Race/ethnicity was not recorded for 36 of the 175 students who received an award. For those students that information was available, the breakdown was:

- 5 Asian students;
- 27 Black or African American students;
- 18 Hispanic/Latino students;
- 1 Nonresident Alien;
- 1 two or more Races; and
- 87 White students.

**Certificate awards by program and gender.** The college granted awards in 12 certificate program areas during the AY 2013. Table D-2 shows awards granted by program, and gender.

<b>Table D-2 Students Awarded a Certificate by Charter Oak State College by Program: Fall 2012 and Fall 2013</b>			
<i>Certificate Program</i>	<i>Total Students Awarded</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>
Child Care and Support Services Mgmt.	43	0	43
Child Care Provider/Assistant	2	0	2
Computer and Information Systems Security/Information Assurance	16	11	5
Education	2	1	1
Health/Health Care Administration	39	7	32
Homeland Security, Law Enforcement, Firefighting and Related Protective Services	1	0	1
Human Development, Family Studies, and Related Services	1	0	1
Legal Assistant/Paralegal	4	1	3
Long Term Care	3	0	3
Management Science	51	25	26
Medical Insurance Coding	7	2	5
Nursing Assistant/Aide and Patient Care Assistant	6	0	6
<b>Total</b>	175	47	128
Source: BOR			

**Length of certificate program.** In terms of the certificate course length for awards, a slight majority were between 15 and 30 credits (52 percent). The remainder was less than 15 credits. There were no programs that exceeded 30 credits. In addition to student and other fees, the cost per-credit for enrolling in an on-line course is \$263 for a Connecticut resident and \$346 for a nonresident.

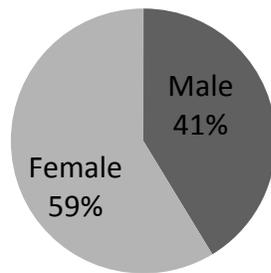
## Goodwin College

In September 2014, program review staff asked the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), which represents 16 accredited nonprofit independent colleges and universities in Connecticut, to assist in collecting certain sub-baccalaureate certificate data from its member institutions for this study. Specifically, PRI requested certain program, demographic, cost, financial aid, enrollment, completion, and placement information to compare to the private occupational schools' and board of regents' data.

It was estimated that at least six of the 16 nonprofit institutions awarded sub-baccalaureate certificates in AY 2013. A response was only received from Goodwin College in December 2014.

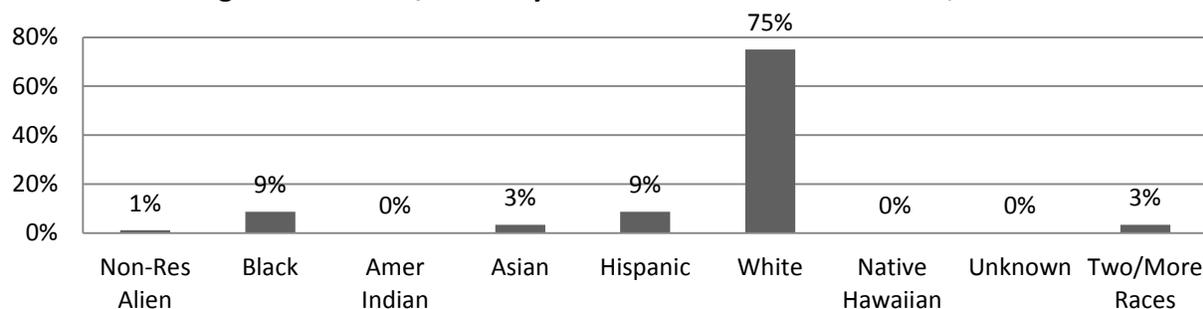
Goodwin College is an accredited nonprofit institution of higher education that was founded in 1999, with "the goal of serving a diverse student population with career-focused degree programs." Goodwin had six for-credit certificate programs that enrolled 92 students in AY 2013. Below is a summary of Goodwin's data.

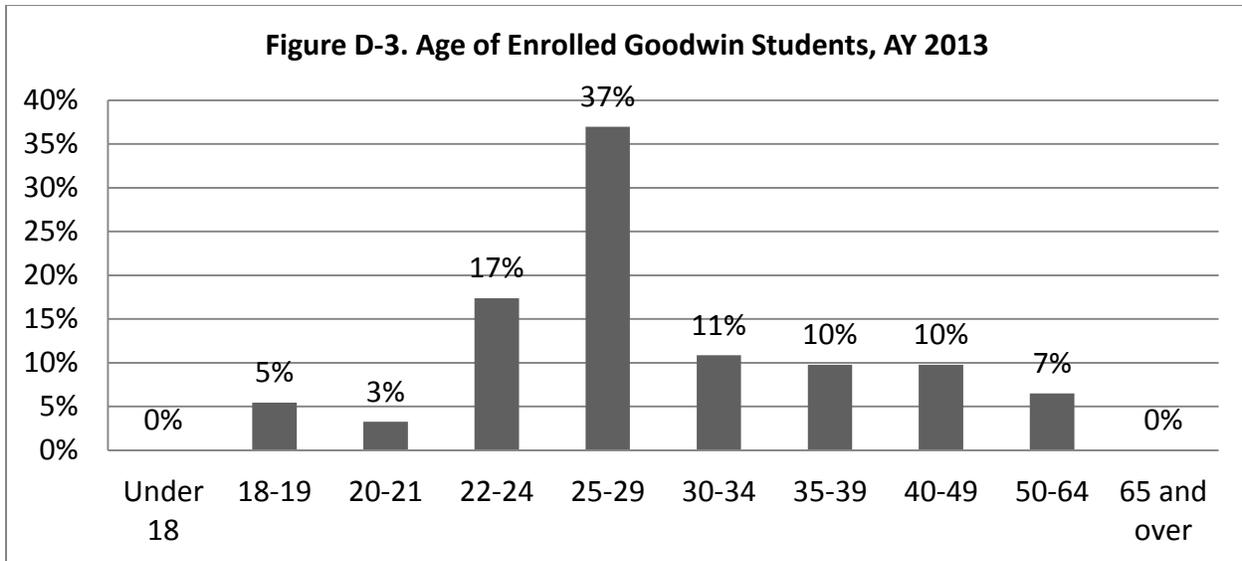
**Figure D-1. Gender of Goodwin Students Enrolled in Certificate Programs, AY 2013**



**Demographics.** As the next three figures show, most of the enrolled students at Goodwin in AY 2013 were female, white, and under the age of 30.

**Figure D-2. Race/Ethnicity of Enrolled Goodwin Students, AY 13**





**Instructional areas.** As noted above, Goodwin enrolled 92 students in six for-credit programs in AY 2013. All of the certificates were in the health professions and are listed below (with AY 2013 enrollment in parentheses):

- Medical Assisting (1);
- Medical Office Management (1);
- EMT-Paramedic Studies (27);
- Phlebotomy & Laboratory Services (10);
- Medical Billing and Coding (19); and
- Histologic Science (34).

**Length, and costs.** The length of the programs tended to be in the middle to longer-term categories. Five of the six certificates were between 30 and 37 credits and one program was 16 credits. The cost per credit for the certificate programs ranged from \$622 to \$791.

**Placement.** There were 129 graduates from Goodwin's six programs in AY 2013 (these were not a cohort of the 94 who enrolled). Of the 129 graduates, 25 students continued their education. Of the remaining students, 68 found employment for a placement rate of about 41 percent. There were no data provided on certificate completion rates or the pass rates for either state licensing or professional certification exams.

**Financial aid.** All of Goodwin's certificate programs qualify for federal financial aid as well as institutional aid. Goodwin did not provide any information on the average amount of financial aid by received students.



**Appendix E**  
**Agency Response**





# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

Office of Higher Education

February 18, 2015

The Honorable John Fonfara, Chair  
The Honorable Christie Carpino, Chair  
Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee  
Capitol Building, Room 506  
Hartford, CT 06106

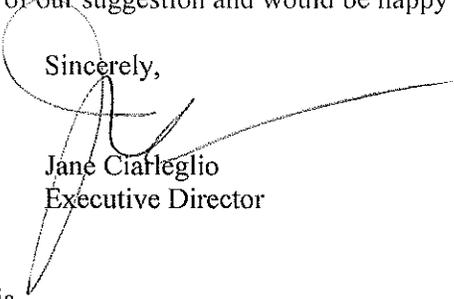
Dear Senator Fonfara and Representative Carpino,

The Office of Higher Education (OHE) would like to thank the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee (PRI) for welcoming our feedback on its Higher Education Certificate Programs Report. Our office is grateful for the hard work that went into creating the report and appreciates the many thoughtful and open conversations that occurred with PRI staff throughout the investigation. In light of our reading of the resulting draft report, we have one suggestion regarding non-credit programs offered by public institutions of higher education (IHE), which we outline below.

We note the report's affirmation that the authority to approve new non-credit certificate programs should remain at the community college level (III.48). The report provides as a reason the need to keep tuition rates low "since accreditation and other requirements do not need to be met" (III.48). While we support the flexibility and cost savings this may provide to the public IHEs, the lack of outside review and approval raises quality concerns. This is especially true for those non-credit programs that do require accreditation in satisfaction of state licensing requirements, such as massage therapy. The committee may want to investigate the possibility of some type of outside review of such programs to ensure that all graduates have the opportunity to obtain a license to practice in the state. Indeed, it may be to the student's advantage that all programs leading to licensed professions are for-credit. This way, students in such programs will be assured of the opportunity to apply for federal financial aid.

We thank you for your consideration of our suggestion and would be happy to discuss it with you further.

Sincerely,

  
Jane Ciafleglio  
Executive Director

cc: Senator Danté Bartolomeo  
Representative Roberta Willis  
Director Carrie Vibert, Esq.  
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